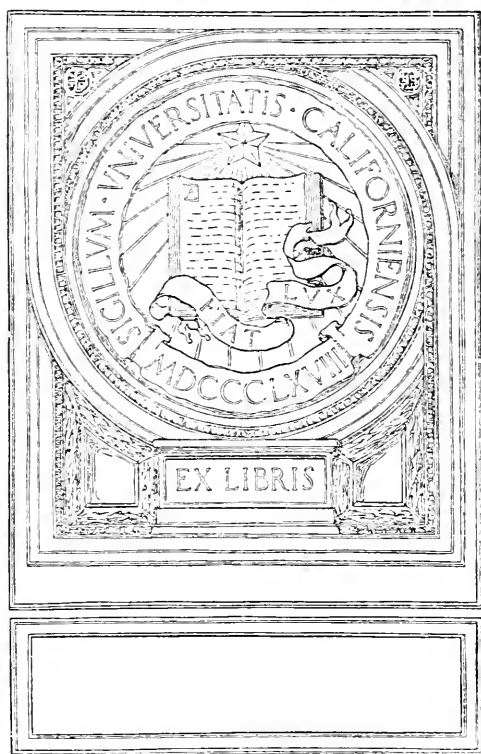


# FORTY YEARS ON THE STAGE

OTHERS (PRINCIPALLY) AND MYSELF

J. H. BARNES

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA  
AT LOS ANGELES



*Green Book*

F. Herbert Day  
Sept 27 "1916  
New York

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# FORTY YEARS ON THE STAGE

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J. H. BARNES (1874)

*Frontispiece*

*Yours sincerely*  
*J. H. Barnes*



[Frontispiece

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J. H. Barnes

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*OTHERS (PRINCIPALLY) AND MYSELF*

BY

J. H. BARNES

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

1915



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# FORTY YEARS ON THE STAGE

## I

I THINK I hear the reader say, "What ! another actor's reminiscences ? " and I am fain to admit that there has been a plentiful crop of them in the last few years. Let me hasten to give my reason and ask excuse for adding mine to the list. In some articles I wrote on stage matters in the *Nineteenth Century* a few years ago, I was able to say with perfect truth, "I have never been interviewed. I have never inspired a paragraph. I have never made speeches," and I may add I have never been photographed except at the request of my manager at the time. I was taught, in my early days on the stage, that the actor's duty was behind the proscenium, and that his best and most telling pronouncements were those made when the curtain was up. In that faith I have lived and worked earnestly and sincerely. It is an old-fashioned and out-of-date creed in these self-asserting days, but in the autumn of one's career it is too late to change, and it follows as a matter of course that I am not one of those who consider their lives, their doings or their thoughts of general or public interest. But in my forty-odd years on the stage I have been brought in contact, and in a representative

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capacity, with nearly every great artist, male and female, on both sides of the Atlantic, and it is of them I propose to write principally. In short, I hope to make my own career a peg on which to hang impressions and anecdotes of men and women and places and circumstances which can hardly fail to prove entertaining reading for many, both inside and outside my own calling. I shall "nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice" !

First, then, to clear the ground as to myself. I was born in the little old-fashioned town of Watlington, in Oxfordshire, on February 26, 1850. In this quaint, old-world place with its genuine Norman Church tower, its genuine Tudor market-place and its "white chalk mark" on the Chiltern Hills under which it nestles, I passed my childhood. My mother died when I was quite an infant, and under the loving care of a remarkable father, and a dear sister, whom I helped to lay to rest only three years ago, I led the ordinary life of an English country boy. In speaking of my father as "remarkable," I do not think I am over-stating my case. A finer specimen of the best yeoman blood of "Old England" (that blood which has done so much for Britain in the past ages) never lived. Upright, fearless, kindly, courteous and loving, and withal humorous, he was indeed—

"A man, take him for all in all,  
I shall not look upon his like again."

Had he lived at the right time, he might well have been the original of the line in Gray's "Elegy"—

"Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast."

He lived respected and beloved, and died regretted by







JOHN BARNES OF WATLINGTON (OXON)

*[To face page 3]*

all, and it often occurs to me that, if in our last long sleep, we are ever permitted to "revisit the glimpses of the moon," I should rest a little easier and sleep a little happier if I dare hope that my own dear son will be able to remember his father in the same way that I remember mine. There was plenty of grit about him, too; and often when I have found myself stubbornly resisting humbug and charlatanism, of which the actor's calling presents a goodly variety, I am inclined to think I inherit some of my good father's characteristics in that respect, and I hold to my tenets all the more strongly.

So much for my father. I make no apology for the enthusiasm. If the expression, "a nature's nobleman," was ever justified, he was a notable instance. For myself, I went to the only really fairly good school there was in the neighbourhood, without any particular distinction except one. I had quite an extraordinarily good memory. My brother, a little older than myself, had frightful trouble with his lessons. I could always study mine (and be quite perfect) on the three-quarters of a mile of road that lay between my home and the school. One instance of this is perhaps worth relating as strongly bearing on my future. Our master was fond of poetry and recitations, etc., and we used to have one afternoon every second week devoted to such studies. I was rather known as the Reciting Boy.

On one occasion our master said he considered that Milton was perhaps the finest and also the most difficult blank verse to commit to memory, and he would give a special prize to any boy who would commit the first book of *Paradise Lost* to memory within the term. On

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the eighteenth day from the time he said it I repeated the whole of the first book, and I still have the little school prize book bearing this inscription on the fly-leaf—

“ Presented to John Barnes as a reward for his compliance with a wish that he should commit the first book of Milton to memory—expressed by his friend and tutor,

“ JOSEPH BROTHWOOD.

“ Christmas, 1861.”

Considering that I was then eleven and a half years old it might be considered an achievement. How this memory was to serve me in after years in the career I was to choose for myself I shall have more than one occasion to refer to.

The agricultural depression that set in in Great Britain about the middle of the nineteenth century, caused by so much cultivation of food products in other parts of the world, and the consequent lowering of prices of the home-grown articles, caught my father (amongst many others) in its toils, and “ times ” became bad in the old home, and it was advisable (indeed, necessary) for me to consider what I was going to do for a living.

Those were the days of firm apprenticeships in business, and, following in the footsteps of an elder brother, it was arranged for me to go to London and take my place in a business house. This was when I was thirteen years old only. And within a few months an event occurred which was destined to have an enormous influence on my after life.

One Sunday morning I found myself attending the





*Photo]*

J. C. M. BELLEW

*[F. H. Fry*

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service in Bloomsbury Chapel, of which the Rev. J. C. M. Bellew was the pastor. Bloomsbury Chapel, long since pulled down, was situated to the south-west of New Oxford Street, in Bloomsbury Street, on the site of what is now a clothing store, etc. Its pastor was a most extraordinary man—well known as a great reader on both sides of the Atlantic and in India. His was undoubtedly one of the most attractive personalities conceivable. With a juvenile set of features, of great character, and white hair, which lay wherever he chose to shake it, and a wonderfully beautiful hand, his appearance alone arrested attention. Add to this a glorious voice, capable of modulation and vibration to every kind of emotion and character, and the fact that he was the very best reader and elocutionist that I have ever heard down to to-day, and his magnetism and charm may be fairly estimated. To the female mind he was well-nigh irresistible, and many were the stories, at the time, of the devotion of his admirers. It was said that his farewell sermon, on leaving India, was preached in a tent to 10,000 people, and as many were on the plain outside endeavouring to catch his tones and words. Certain it is that anything like his power and eloquence in the reading desk and pulpit I have never heard. Has any one ever considered the full possibilities of some portions of the service of the Anglican Church? Some of the prayers and collects, for instance? I am the last man to advocate theatricalism in devotion, but I am bound to say that J. C. M. Bellew first opened my eyes and ears to the beauties and strength of the Church service. After having heard them droned out, all my boyhood days, by the ordinary

## 6 FORTY YEARS ON THE STAGE

country parson, his reading came as a revelation to me and arrested my attention as nothing had ever done before. It is, I believe, a fact that Bellew would have been an actor (as his son Kyrle eventually became), but unfortunately the graces of his person did not extend to his nether limbs, which were painfully parenthetic in their conformation. In his public readings, which were immensely popular in whatever part of the world they were heard, this part of his anatomy was unexposed. Of his dramatic skill it may be noted that he coached Charles Fechter, the French romantic actor, in the part of Hamlet (a performance which Fechter made world-famous), and I once saw Bellew make the curious experiment of reading the whole of that play (every part) with all the characters performed, in dumb show, by a company of trained artists.

Nothing could exceed the attractiveness of his public readings, and I say, without any hesitation, he has never been equalled. I just knew, and heard several times, the great Charles Dickens read, but he did not compare with Bellew, even in reading his own works, except in the one notable instance of the murder of Nancy Sikes, in which he was incomparable. In comedy, tragedy, dialect, humour, or pathos, Bellew was *facile princeps*.

From all this it may be gathered how completely he compelled my admiration and swayed my understanding when I first heard him on that eventful Sunday morning in church. He rekindled in my mind all the love of my schooldays for the study of the poets, and relighted a spark which, though it smouldered for a long time, was destined to burst into open flame, and burn on for all my days.

In the early seventies Bellew undertook a reading tour in the United States, which was eminently successful, but whether the climate disagreed with him, or the work was too hard, or from natural causes, I have no means of knowing, but he returned a jaded, sallow, worn-out-looking man, and died shortly afterwards. Nor can I speak of him as a religionist, pure and simple ! Coincidentally with his great artistic and financial success as a public reader he "verted" to Roman Catholicism. How fervently he followed up that faith I know not. I attended every Bellew reading I could ever get to, and went to as many theatres as I could afford for years, and became familiar, as any outsider could, with the men and women and the affairs of the stage, and as a matter of course, was an ambitious mimic of much that I saw and heard; but my father, to whom I broached my ambition, would not hear of the stage as an occupation (there was an enormous amount of prejudice against it in those days). So for eight years I was destined to continue in a business which was distasteful and irksome to me, with only the annual relaxation of a holiday in my old home.

Whilst on one of these holidays an incident occurred which has often struck me since as being distinctly humorous. I went with my father to Thame (in Oxfordshire) on market day. As we alighted from the old-fashioned gig (of those days) in the yard of "The Spread Eagle" Inn, the ostler came to our horse's head. He had a most remarkable face, a Bardolphian nose of huge proportions, a complexion in which all the hues of the rainbow were represented, and eyes which spoke all too plainly of stronger liquid refreshment than



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water. My father (to whom he was an old acquaintance) said : " Johnnie ! It has taken a lot of money to paint your nose that nice colour, hasn't it ? " He replied, without a moment's hesitation : " E'es, sur, so it 'ave ! but if I could affoord it I'd 'ave 'im varnished neow."

In 1868 came the first great grief of my life. I lost my good father, and it seemed at the time that I could never get over it. But " Time, the healer," came to my aid, and my longing for a change of occupation re-asserted itself when I was my own master. For the next three years I worked on in business all day and studied hard well on into the middle of most of the nights, and October 22, 1870, I made my first public appearance as a reader in Westbourne Hall, Bayswater. I gave another reading on December 14, 1870, at the same place, and yet another on November 16, 1871. I received considerable Press encouragement.

At the time of my third venture I had got, through a friend, the merest speaking acquaintance with Dion Boucicault the elder and, with the temerity of the amateur, I wrote to ask him to attend with a view to judging of my qualification for the stage. Needless to say, he did not do so, but he wrote me a very pleasant and characteristic letter in which he said : " Readings give little or no proof of dramatic ability. A good reader may be a very bad actor, and vice versa. If you are fully bent on going on the stage begin at the bottom rung of the ladder and work up like an honest man," and he added a sentence which, as a precept, I have never lost sight of to this day : " Depend upon it, experience is the only master, and the public are the only judges."

My last years in business had been quite successful, and I was mentioned for a good position in an enterprise, then under consideration, which has turned out amazingly well. It is now one of London's biggest monuments of business success, and has resulted in a baronetcy for the manager, with whom I might have been associated. An old proverb says, "You can't burn the candle at both ends," and the strenuous life I was leading began to "tell its tale," and I was advised by a kind old doctor, who knew me well, that if I did not give up one employment or the other I should break down utterly, or lose my reason, and one day when suffering from acute neuralgia, I resented an insulting remark made by an officious "jack in office," and finally resigned my position and started out to try my fortunes in the walk of life for which I had been hungering for so long a time. A stroke of luck befell me almost at once! I had an acquaintance named Henry Melton, who had been the life-long friend and was the executor of the will of Walter Montgomery, the brilliant actor and elocutionist of world-wide renown, who shot himself in London on account of a most beautiful but worthless woman some time before this. Melton introduced me to Mr. H. L. Batemen, manager of the Lyceum, who was about to produce *The Bells*, in which Sir Henry (then Mr.) Irving, made his enormous success and stepped into stellar rank. To my great joy, Mr. Bateman gave me an opportunity to make my first appearance on the regular stage as Mr. Irving's double in what was to him (and the theatre) a great and eventful night. And, for good or ill, I was an actor! This was on the night of November 25, 1871.

## II

FEW people know how momentous, in more ways than one, was the first night of *The Bells*. Mr. Bateman, an American manager settled in London, had already launched his eldest daughter, Kate—the present respected and esteemed Mrs. Crowe—as a successful star in England through the medium of the play *Leah, the Forsaken*, and, with a limited capital, had taken the Lyceum, which had been a failure and closed for a long time, with the hope of making another daughter, Isabel, also a great feature. He rather relied on a fine character actor of the day, George Belmore, for his male attraction. He had engaged a good all-round company, though, including Irving. The first play—*Fanchette*—failed disastrously, and was followed by a version of *The Pickwick Papers*, prepared by James Albery. In it Belmore made only a moderate success as Sam Weller. Irving succeeded greatly as Alfred Jingle, but again the play failed to attract the public. *The Bells*, a version of *Le Juif Polonais*, adapted by a London solicitor, Leopold Lewis, was put up as a last and forlorn hope. Had it failed the theatre would have closed. It succeeded from the very first line. Irving scored a veritable triumph from which he never looked back, and the Lyceum started on a tide of prosperity the like of which it had scarcely ever known before. *Pickwick*

was played as an after-piece the first night of *The Bells* and for many weeks afterwards, but Irving soon resigned the part of Jingle to Charles Warner and confined his efforts to the conscience-stricken Mathias only. I shall have occasion to refer to Irving more fully in the course of these reminiscences, but an incident of this time is, I think, worthy of record.

After one of the rehearsals of *The Bells*, I found myself (I don't know how) in conversation with Bateman, Lewis, and Irving, when some topic of the politics of the day was being discussed. As showing how one man, destined to rise, seems to smell out another of a similar character, I remember, very distinctly, Irving saying, in his most telling manner, "Ah! I fancy we shall hear a good deal more of this chap Joe Chamberlain from Birmingham before we have done with him." Be it remembered that at that time Irving himself had not played *The Bells* and Joseph Chamberlain was known more as a very successful and popular Mayor of Birmingham than as the brilliant statesman who was destined to take so prominent a part in the affairs of Great Britain.

Consequent on Irving's success, Bateman became his very enthusiastic champion, and voiced his excellences as an artist on every possible occasion in language of great force, liberally embellished with his own picturesque vocabulary. Indeed, it became so much a mania with him that a few years later (1875), at a banquet given to celebrate the 100th night of Irving's performance of *Hamlet*, he bitterly resented some remarks of Charles Dickens, jun., in which the latter referred to the then impending visit of the great Italian tragedian, Salvini,

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to London, and claimed a generous reception for him. Bateman regarded it as quite a personal and almost international affront, which was odd, considering his own nationality. However, Salvini came and set London wild with his Othello for one season; but his great success did not extend to a second.

Bateman was, withal, a kind friend to me, and soon advised me that as *The Bells* was "in for a run," I was not doing myself much good in continuing in a negative non-speaking part, and so I sought out H. J. Montague, whom I had met on one or two occasions, and who was then the manager of the Globe in Newcastle Street, Strand—long since swept away by the radical street improvements of London which have given us Kingsway and Aldwych.

Montague offered me a small engagement, and I played my first speaking part under his management on December 18, 1871, in the farce *My Wife's Out*, with E. W. Garden (still happily with us) and Misses Nellie and Maria Harris—daughters of Augustus Harris—(a very able man), stage manager of Covent Garden Opera under Gye, and sisters of him who afterwards became Sir Augustus Harris, manager of Drury Lane. A candid, valued friend told me years afterwards that, witnessing my effort at that time, he came to the conclusion that I had not only mistaken my vocation, but was a "stick" of a very pronounced kind.

A book might be written about the career of Montague. Indeed, it is almost a wonder it was never done. What can I say that will not appear like "painting the lily" or "gilding refined gold"? His dearest friend would not have spoken of Harry Montague as a great actor,



AUGUSTUS HARRIS THE ELDER  
(Stage Manager, Covent Garden Opera)

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and yet he had a vogue which many a great actor might have envied, and filled a niche in which he has not to this day been replaced. Coming into prominence with the so-called "tea-cup and saucer school" of Tom Robertson, he had a method and a charm which were all his own. He was not really handsome, though he had a most pleasing face and a graceful, lithe figure, but he had the delightful attribute, both on and off the stage, of making it appear that the person he was addressing was *the one* of all the earth in whom he was most interested. No one has ever spoken the pleasant, tender lines of modern comedy or interested an audience in the purely *jeune premier rôle* as he did. One reads a good deal in these days of "*matinée* idols." Comparatively speaking, Montague was a "*matinée* god." The younger female population of two countries seemed to consider that the "sun rose and set" in his one pleasant personality.

After enjoying unbounded popularity in England, he journeyed to New York and took his place in the company at Wallack's Theatre (then at 13th Street and Broadway). There his triumphs, artistic and personal, were renewed and, if possible, redoubled. Indeed, I have myself, when in his company, been a witness of circumstances where his social popularity was positively embarrassing. He never returned to England, after his success in New York, where he made a handsome income for some years. Alas! with a physique never too robust, he scarcely led the life which makes for longevity. With a disposition to consumption, he broke a blood-vessel and died quite suddenly in San Francisco in what should have been the prime of life. This was in 1878.



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His funeral in the "City of the Golden Gate" is almost historic, and partook of the nature of a State or even Federal function. His body was brought to New York and buried from "The Little Church Round the Corner," where Dr. Houghton, one of his dearest and most loving friends, spoke the last sympathetic words to waft him on his final journey, and where a most beautiful stained glass window is erected to his memory by his admirers. This is an excellent reproduction of his features. He appears in the costume of the monk's disguise worn by Romeo in the Ballroom scene of *Romeo and Juliet*. This part, by the by, he never played, except in the Balcony scene, once, for a benefit in London. The part was one of a greater depth than he could tackle successfully. Poor Harry Montague! And yet why "poor"? To have given pleasure to countless thousands and to be remembered affectionately by a large section of the public of two hemispheres is not to have lived in vain!

I have spoken of "The Little Church Round the Corner." To those who have not read Joseph Jefferson's biography, where the incident is so charmingly described, it may be interesting to learn how the church got that name. An actor, a great friend of Jefferson's, died, and Jefferson applied to the pastor of a certain fashionable church in New York to conduct his funeral. This gentleman demurred at the fact of burying an actor (such was the prejudice of those days), but, said he, "There is a little church round the corner where you might be able to arrange it." Jefferson withdrew, saying, "Then God bless the little church round the corner." The story got abroad, and ever since that

time the church has gone by that name. It is endeared to members of the actor's calling by many circumstances. Its real name is "The Church of the Transfiguration." It stands in 29th Street, just out of 5th Avenue. The pastor, for many years (the Rev. Dr. Houghton), understood us and our work. He sympathised with our aspirations, as with our heart-breakings and calamities, and here, just within a few steps of the "busy haunts of men," there was always a welcome and quiet seclusion of rest and peace; and here so many of our comrades, male and female, have been wished a loving farewell when starting on their great final tour—a farewell wherein their failings have been forgotten and their merits remembered by one who knew and loved us all, as equal members of the one great family it was his work to guide.

I stayed with Montague the whole of the season and got a chance of playing two or three small original parts, and also some important ones as understudies (for which I was always ready), and it was a pleasant little feather in my cap that Montague was rather annoyed that I did not remain with him for the following season. About this time also I got a flattering and tempting offer to return to my former business life, but I had "smelt the powder"—the battle-cry rang in my ears, and work, work, work in my chosen profession was the absolute "breath of my nostrils."

After a reading in my native place (June 28, 1872) for a local charity under the auspices of the vicar of the parish and some other local "big wigs," I joined the company engaged for the first opening of the Londesborough, Scarborough (July 8, 1872), as first walking

gentleman. Those were the days of strict lines of business and first walking gentleman was an appreciable advance for me. At this fashionable Yorkshire seaside resort work was very hard indeed, but never too hard for me. The theatre was opened by a Mr. Waddington, a wealthy pianoforte dealer of York. We had to change the bill two and three times every week, and played usually a farce, a comedy, and a burlesque every night, with a drama on Saturdays. Business was fair only. In the company was a gentleman making his first appearance on the stage, named H. G. Blythe, son of an Indian judge, an Oxford graduate. He afterwards crossed to the United States, changed his name, and was the well-known actor, quite fair dramatist, and quite brilliant humorist, known as Maurice Barrymore, who married that capital actress Georgie Drew, daughter of Mrs. John Drew, the elder, and sister of the present popular John Drew. Poor Barry's sad end was regretted by all. He had many friends and few, if any, enemies.

Our leading man at Scarborough was Charles Vandenhoff, son of George Vandenhoff, who settled in Boston, U.S.A., as a teacher of elocution, etc. Rather a dramatic episode arose in this connection. When Charles was becoming well known on the stage, his father wrote a public letter, stating that "only two men had any right to use the historical theatrical name of Vandenhoff—himself and Henry Vandenhoff, then residing at Liverpool." This was, strictly speaking, true, but certainly cruel and in questionable taste, Charley felt it very, very bitterly. He wrote a dignified and intensely human letter in reply, in which he

signed himself "the natural son of a most unnatural father," but, in a way, it seemed to embitter his whole life. Charles Vandenhoff was a good all-round actor, a little undersized, perhaps, thoroughly experienced, just a trifle stagey, but steady and sound; a loyal friend and a good fellow. A strong friendship which began at Scarborough between Barrymore and him ended only with their respective lives.

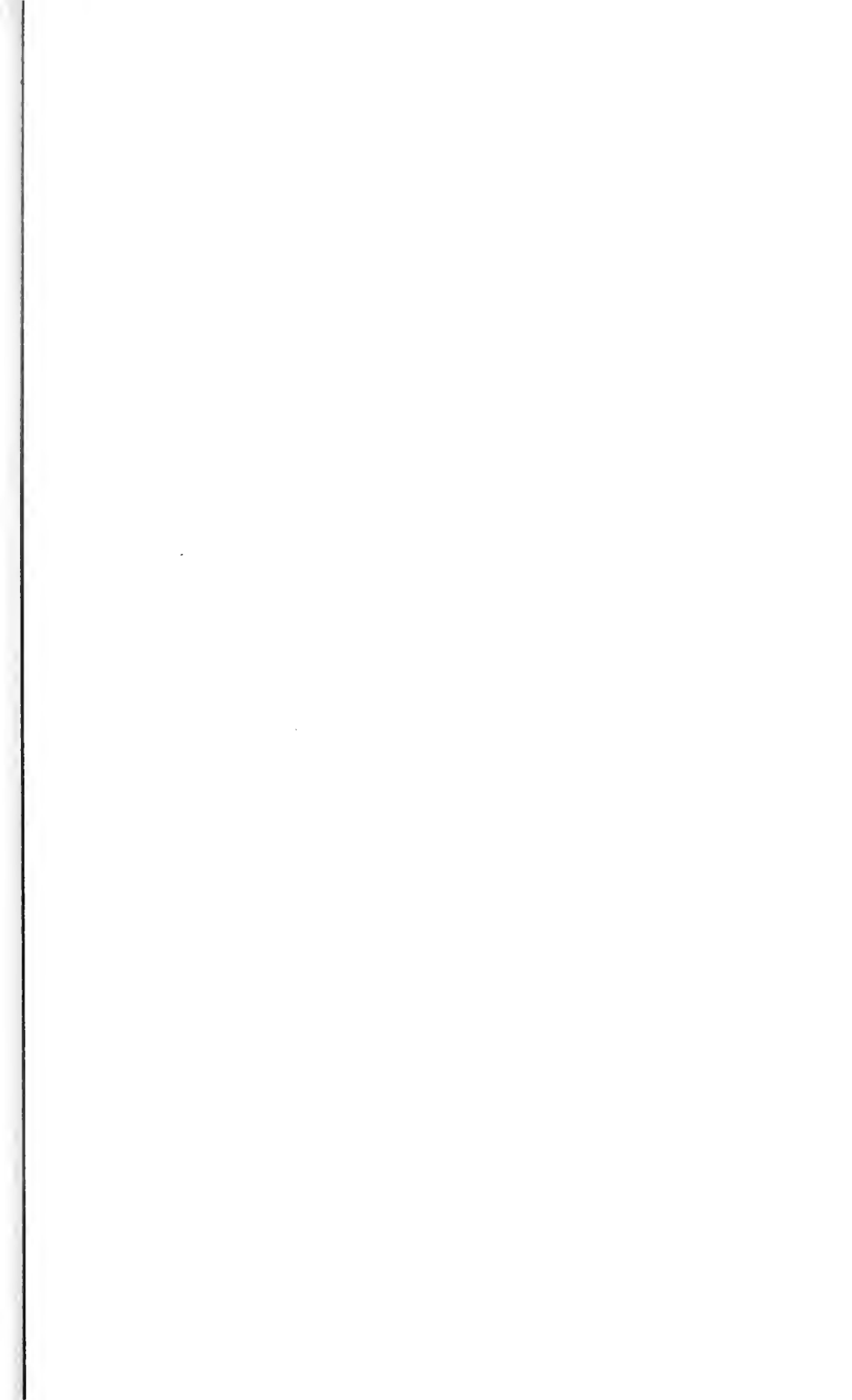
Only one "star" came to us during the season—that capital character actor, John Clarke, and he brought with him his bride, to whom he had been married the week before at Yarmouth, a pretty creature and pleasant actress—Miss Furtado (long at the Adelphi, London).

Two rather funny incidents occurred during this season, the first one to myself. I was playing Alphonse de Grandier in *Delicate Ground*, a charming one-act play taken from the same French source as Sardou used in recent years as the basis of *Divorçons*. Alphonse has to enter very nervously, calling on the wife of Citizen Sanfroid, disguised as a pack-man, with his box of wares, as if for sale. Citizen Sangfroid says, "Sit down, at all events; your legs seem giving way under you." I entered as nervously as I could and was received with such a shout of laughter that I was disposed to plume myself on the possession of, till then, undiscovered comedy powers. Alas! I was soon undeceived. A little later in the scene I discovered I had carried on a box labelled at the end showing the audience, "Epps' Homœopathic Cocoa," which the property man had dodged up in a hurry for the purpose without noticing the aforesaid label. As the action of the play takes place at the period of the French Revolution, it

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can be readily imagined the audience found good cause for merriment.

The other accident was equally unfortunate. The play was *The Corsican Brothers* one Saturday night. The trick swords had been telegraphed for from London, but had not arrived, and the manager promised the actors that if they would file their own swords so that they would break at the right moment he would indemnify them for the loss. They did so. At the given moment in the celebrated duel scene where Montgiron said, "This fight cannot proceed; Monsieur de Chateau Renaud's sword is broken"—(as it was)—"the weapons are not equal;" Vandenhoff, as Fabian di Franchi replied, "It shall proceed. I have made them equal." Montgiron: "Implacable?" Fabian di Franchi: "As destiny!" and he essayed to break his sword over his knee; it bent double. He repeated, "As destiny" and tried to break it the other way; again it bent double. What it was made of Heaven alone knows, but it seemed as if it could be tied in a knot without breaking, and poor Fabian had to finish the fight with the butt end of Chateau Renaud's sword, amid the derisive and amused shouts of the audience.





MISS ADELATIDE NEILSON  
(See page 50)



Photo] WILLIAM TERRISS (1872)  
[Elliot and Fry

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### III

THE autumn of 1872 found me back in London at Drury Lane in Andrew Halliday's version of Sir Walter Scott's romance, "The Lady of the Lake."

The manager of the theatre was F. B. Chatterton, the gentleman who gave out the oft-quoted statement that "Shakespeare spelt ruin and Byron bankruptcy," which was pretty nearly true as he understood it; but, in the words of a well-known saying, "There were others."

Halliday seemed, at that time, to have a "corner" in Scott's works, and produced one nearly every year. I am afraid this one was not a good play, but it had a very successful feature, namely, a gorgeously painted panorama of Loch Katrine, by that scenic master, William Beverley. The cast was a strong one—James Fernandez (Fitzjames), Henry Sinclair (Roderick Dhu) J. Dewhurst (Douglas), William Terriss (Malcolm Graeme), and our leading lady was a beautiful and charming creature, Miss Maria B. Jones, quite a talented actress, who died at an early age, to the sorrow of a large circle of friends and the inexpressible grief of her husband, F. C. Philips, the distinguished dramatist and novelist, author of *As in a Looking Glass*.

On the first night a contretemps occurred which would have broken the nerve and heart of any one less in



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earnest than I was. I played a small part called Captain Lewis, and I remember I was dressed in an all-yellow costume, looking like a large animated mustard pot. At a certain point I had to advance, with my sword drawn, to protect the heroine from the unwelcome attentions of a body of soldiery, saying : "Stand back, ye knaves !" I did this correctly as rehearsed, but, unhappily, our stage manager, Mr. Edward Sterling, who was growing old and somewhat oblivious, had not sufficiently instructed them in their advances or "business," and I had threateningly drawn my sword on as mild a lot of supers as ever killed a scene by their incompetence. A roar of laughter went up from all parts of that vast auditorium which I can never forget. The manager, and indeed everybody concerned, hastened to absolve me from blame in the matter, and I even received credit for displaying nerve in such a situation ; but it was greatly disconcerting, and is to this day a painful memory.

But this engagement brought me one great compensating pleasure. A friendship begun at that time with that fine actor and downright good fellow, James Fernandez, has continued without a moment's break or intermission down to this day. Amongst the many dearly loved comrades in my profession I could think of none whose friendship has worn better or brought me greater happiness than that of this able, genial, and sterling artist and chum.

In December (1872) I joined the company at the old Strand, then under the management of Mrs. Swanborough, a kind old lady with a big heart, but who had not had many of the advantages of education, and whose

malapropisms were the cause of much mirth amongst her acquaintances. The things she said, and the things that were said by others and attributed to her, would fill many pages. On one occasion she was congratulated on a pretty carpet in use on the stage in a drawing-room scene. She replied, "Ah, I'm glad you like it! The Prince of Wales *expectorated* on that carpet when he was here the other night."

On another occasion she was speaking of improvements she had made in the theatre, and in enumerating them said, "And I have had a new *spinal* staircase put up to the flies."

When the Vaudeville was first opened it was to be called the Bijou, and the prospective managers announced were David James, Thomas Thorne, and H. J. Montague. At that time David James had a year's contract still to run at the Strand, and Mrs. Swanborough said: "If Mr. David James intends to play me any tricks and go off to that *Bougie* theatre, I'll serve him with an *injection*, and see what comes of that."

At the Strand I met that incomparable humorist, H. J. Byron. I played in three of his plays—*Sir Simon Simple*, *Prompter's Box*, and *Old Soldiers* (first production), and was fortunate in making a firm friend of him, which continued up to his death. He was not a great actor, though he had a delightful way of delivering his own good lines. And what good lines they were! But every second sentence that fell from his lips was a joke, and always a genial one, never sarcastic or caustic. It would, indeed, fill a volume to record half of his sallies, but many of them have passed into proverbs ere this, and I am constantly being told of jokes that men

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have made nowadays which, to my certain knowledge, date back to and emanated from him.

Heaven knows how many plays he wrote, dramas, comedies, and burlesques. He has been known to write an act of a comedy in a day, and a short burlesque between Friday and the following Monday. Perhaps his best play was a comedy, entitled *Cyri!l's Success* ; but, of course, his most successful one was *Our Boys*, which ran fourteen hundred nights in London on its first production, and has had any number of revivals since—indeed, it is constantly being played somewhere to this day.

One of his best jokes was on the occasion of the production of his drama, *The Lancashire Lass*, at the old Queen's. A very long wait occurred at the end of the third act. The orchestra had tried to bridge over the gap, and the audience were getting very impatient indeed. Byron was in a box with E. L. Blanchard, the critic. All at once a strong sawing was heard at the back of the curtain. Blanchard sympathetically and excitedly said, "What's that, Byron? What's that?" Byron quite calmly replied, "Upon my soul, I don't know, old man, unless they are cutting out the fourth act!"

When he was manager of one of the Liverpool theatres he was consulting with the foreman during some re-decorations as to a suitable embellishment for a large bare space on the wall of the box-office. The foreman made two or three suggestions, such as the City coat of arms, etc., etc., when Byron said: "No, no! I have it; the very thing—Shakespearean quotation, 'So much for book-ing 'em.'"

On what proved to be his death-bed (for he never got up again) he made a joke. His coachman came to see him, and in the course of conversation said, "That grey mare of ours don't seem to do well, sir! I think I must give her a ball!" Byron replied, feebly, "Well, do so, then; but don't ask too many."

He had a perfect mania for changing his places of residence, and it must have been a frightfully expensive one, for he never seemed to be six months in the same home. For a man who did so much clever work he did not die well off, and I fear with him, as with many others, it was easier to make money than to keep it. A kindlier, cleverer, wittier, or more genial gentleman never lived. *Requiescat in pace.*

Other well-known artists at the Strand at that time were Edward Terry, W. H. Vernon, Miss Kate Bishop, Miss Ada Swanborough, and that wonderful "old woman," Mrs. Raymond.

And yet it is wrong to speak of Lucy Raymond as an "old woman" of the stage! She was in fact a female low comedian, if ever there was one. I have seen all the best comic acting of my day, but I don't believe I can recall any man or woman who could excel this extraordinary old lady in compelling laughter. She had a funny, squatty figure, and a large face, with a broad man's jowl and a kind of stony, fixed, perplexed stare. Heaven help the comedian who fancied he was getting all the laughs if he was playing a scene with her. I have in my recollection one or two such cases. She was fairness itself, but she had only to fix that stony stare on the other performer and jerk out her lines in her own inimitable way for the audience to be convulsed.

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She positively drew money to the theatre on her own account. It was not unusual to hear old gentlemen say in trains and omnibuses, "I always go to see Lucy Raymond; she makes me laugh so."

If it were possible for her to be funnier than when she was speaking her lines it was when she forgot them. Her perplexity was side-splitting. On the first night of *Old Soldiers* she had to say to Miss Kate Bishop: "Shakespeare says, 'What's in a name?' I say everything." Under the influence of first-night nervousness, her mind wandered temporarily, and she said, haltingly and spasmodically, "Somebody says—who is it? is it Chaucer? or Sir Benjamin Jonson? or Shakespeare? or some of those old gentlemen you see in Westminster Abbey?—'What's in a name?'"

Byron, who was standing by, shook with laughter, and immediately said: "Well, I can't write anything as funny as that; I'll put that in." And it will be found incorporated in the printed book of the play as sold to-day.

After a short and futile return to the Lyceum, under promise of a part in a play, which was eventually abandoned, in July 1873, I was engaged by Edward Saker, the manager of the Alexandra, Liverpool, for a play called *Coming Home; or, Sithors to Grind*. It was written by an actor named George Leitch, who had been first low comedian with me the previous summer in Scarborough, and had kindly recommended me. Saker had produced the play in the country, and was fired with an ambition to act it in London, for which purpose he took the old Globe for a summer season. It was not quite a good play, but a very interesting one, a sort of

recollected dream of Dickens. It succeeded mildly only. Mrs. Saker (Miss Marie O'Beirne) was in the cast, also Fred Warde, who afterwards went to America and finally became a fairly successful classic star. But it was destined to be a most important event for me. Edward Saker was the younger brother of Mrs. R. H. Wyndham, of the Edinburgh Royal, and her husband was among the audience at his brother-in-law's first night. I was fortunate in striking him favourably, and he inquired from Saker who and what I was. Learning that I was reliable and always in earnest, he asked me to meet him at dinner at the Tavistock Hotel, Covent Garden. I accepted his invitation, and, to my great surprise, he offered me the position of leading man at his theatre. Now at that time the Royal, Edinburgh, housed not only one of the last of the historic stock companies, but was recognised as one of the very finest training schools of the British stage, where many of the foremost artists had served their apprenticeship under the marvellous and incomparable stage management and instruction of Mrs. Wyndham (down to to-day the best I have ever seen). I pointed out to Mr. Wyndham that I had never been in such a position and that every part I should play under such an engagement would be for the first time. He replied that he was aware of that, but from what he had learned about me Mrs. W. and he were willing to take the risk if I were willing to work and try hard. Of all things, "it was the very favour I would have asked."

I gratefully closed with the offer, took my books and parts with me, and went down to my old home in Oxfordshire, and here the excellent memory which I

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spoke of in my opening pages was to serve me well. I lay about the meadows and the orchard and on the banks of the old mill stream, and went to Edinburgh for my opening on September 22, 1873, perfect in the words of twenty-six leading parts.

#### IV

THIS may be a good place, perhaps, for a few words on the subject of the old stock companies. One so constantly hears the question mooted and discussed (and often by people who know nothing whatever about it) that a few words by one who does may be of interest. Let me say at once that, in my judgment, the stock companies of the last generation were by "all odds" the finest schools of the drama that ever existed. In them work was continuous, varied, and earnest, and nearly always under the guidance of an experienced stage manager who could, and did, give the aspirant the benefit of his knowledge, and, be it remembered, the companies were, generally speaking, made up of artists of considerable attainment as well as almost unlimited practice. When I have sometimes had occasion to speak of the work we used to get through, young ladies and gentlemen of to-day have sneeringly said, "Yes, but how was it done?" I have always replied—and I state here without the slightest reservation—that if we had dared to give the slipshod, colourless, invertebrate performances I see very often on the stage nowadays, we should have "got our notice" in less time than it takes to write this sentence.

The last two of these fine stock companies were at Bristol and Edinburgh. Bristol was under Mr. and Mrs.



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Chute and Edinburgh, as I have said, under Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham; and these two companies between them supplied many of the prominent artists of the contemporary stage. From Bristol came Ellen Terry, Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal), Miss Henrietta Hodson (Mrs. Henry Labouchere), William and George Rignold, Charles Coghlan, etc. From Edinburgh came Henry Irving, J. L. Toole, A. W. Pinero, John Ryder, Mrs. Scott Siddons, and many others.

The Royal, Edinburgh, was very nearly ideal as a training ground. Everything was punctual and methodical. We could never have got through the work we did if it had not been so. Consequently it was the easiest possible theatre to work in. No one took liberties; they were not permitted.

Robert Wyndham himself was quite a good actor when he chose to work, but he had grown fond of his ease when I knew him. He was a splendid Mercutio, Rolando (*Honeymoon*), and good in all light comedy parts of the old plays; an excellent farce actor in parts such as Felix O'Callaghan (*His Last Legs*), and an admirable Irish comedian (he was an Irishman). Mrs. Wyndham was, really, rather a stagey actress, but she seldom acted. She confined her efforts almost entirely to stage management, and in all my life I have never met a person with such a general and complete knowledge of this branch of our work and such a splendid method of imparting that knowledge to others. She knew every phase of the drama, from *Hamlet* to the children's ballet of the pantomime. She had the classic plays at her finger-tips, and her brain was a veritable treasure house of the effects and points made by all the



MRS. WYNDHAM

*Of Edinburgh*



R. H. WYNDHAM

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great actors of her time, and she was never happier than when helping those who *tried*. She had a most direct method, and her favourite expression, "This is what you do, and this is why you do it," conveyed as much as many stage directors could conjure up in a whole day, and was generally found to be as effective and sound as the result of any amount of reflection.

In my early days I worked under three great stage managers—Mrs. Wyndham, Charles Calvert (of Manchester), and Dion Boucicault (the elder), and, with every respect to modern opinion I do not think any one since could compare with any of the three. To Mrs. Wyndham I owe a deep debt of gratitude for much kindly consideration and advice, and I shall always feel that whatever I may have done in my life in the direction of pleasing my public dates from her expert instruction.

One great difference to be noticed between the old and modern day stage managers is that, whereas the old ones came to the theatre with their ideas cut and dried and ready to be rehearsed straight away, the modern man nearly always moves his characters about like pawns on a chess-board till he finds his effects, and thereby takes hours and days about what used to take minutes.

One good story of Mrs. Wyndham before passing on. A clown had come down from London for the Christmas pantomime calling himself Signor Thomasini. I shrewdly suspect his name was Thomas and his "native heath" somewhere near the Whitechapel Road. The production of the pantomime was approaching. A rehearsal was called for the "comic scenes" at 11 o'clock—the

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“opening” at 12 o’clock. At 12 o’clock, punctual as ever, Mrs. W. came on the stage and found it littered with the *débris* of the comic scenes—perambulators, bandboxes, dolls, sausages, etc. Calling Henderson, the prompter, she said, in her most austere, inflexible manner—

MRS. W. : Mr. Henderson, it is 12 o’clock; why is the stage not ready for me ?

HENDERSON : I can’t help it, madam. You must speak to the Signor.

MRS. W. : Will you bring the Signor to me ?

*(Advance the Signor, obsequiously.)*

MRS. W. : Signor Thomasini, I wish you to understand, once and for all, that I am an absolutely punctual woman. I give you an hour for your comic scenes. I call them at 11 o’clock, and my “opening” at 12 o’clock, and I expect to begin at 12 o’clock. Please remember that in future.

THE SIGNOR *(in choice Cockney dialect)* : I couldn’t ’elp it, Mrs. Wyndham; they ’adn’t got my bloomin’ slums and fakes ready, an’ I couldn’t get on.

MRS. W. *(coldly, without the smallest change in her face or manner)* : Mr. Henderson, why were the Signor’s “blooming slums and fakes” not ready for him at the appointed time ?

The Edinburgh audiences of those days were quite up to the average in intelligence and artistic appreciation, and it used to be said, with some degree of truth, that any one who could “pass muster in Edinburgh could do well anywhere.” There was a certain amount of reason for this. Edinburgh has always been in the





MRS. SCOTT SIDDONS

*[To face page 31]*

van in matters educational, and, even then, high-class education was to be had there for much less expenditure than in the South. The consequence was that many people of good family and limited means had settled there to enjoy those advantages in the bringing up of their children, and the number of educated, thinking, and intellectual minds amongst the usual theatre audiences was quite a goodly one.

I entered on my engagement there full of hope and determination. My opening part was *Romeo*, with Mrs. Scott Siddons as *Juliet*. I received a somewhat cold welcome, but in the course of Mrs. Siddons's fortnight's engagement (in which I played some eight or nine parts of the classic drama, as well as in one manuscript play, *Ordeal by Touch*, by Richard Lee), I began to feel the audience warming towards me, and began, also, to feel my feet. I had followed a good (if rather stagey) leading man, and perhaps what I lacked in skill I made up in freshness and sincerity; at all events, I soon found myself appreciably growing in favour, and it was the beginning of as happy a time as I can call to mind in all my career. Did an actor ever know a better time, or feel a greater amount of personal gratification than was his lot as a favourite in one of the old stock companies? I doubt it very much, no matter what his future might have in store. Every man and woman in the place was his friend, and in his little realm he was "monarch of all he surveyed."

Mrs. Scott Siddons was a sweet little gentlewoman, with a beautiful classic set of features and a petite, pretty figure. She was not a powerful actress, but had very distinct charm and a delightfully educated and



refined method. She just missed taking the place on the stage to which she aspired, and, later on, fell under the ban of domestic trouble, but I fancy very many people who remember her treasure a warm spot in their hearts for a very clever and charming little lady.

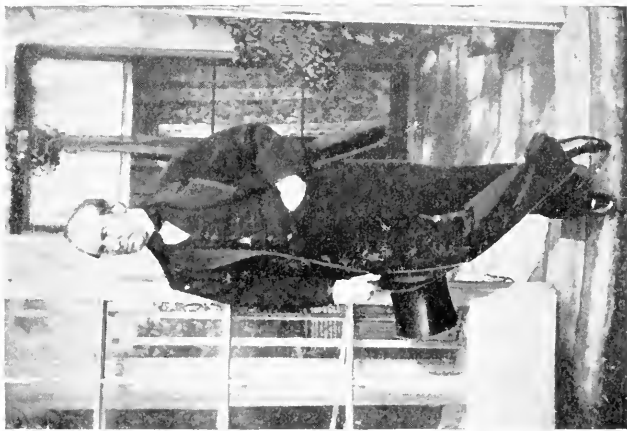
Apart from our own productions during the season I met as stars besides Mrs. Siddons, J. L. Toole (of him more anon), Henry Talbot (a tragedian who scarcely reached front rank—his real name was Calvert, and he was the son of a master of the Edinburgh High School, hence he had a particular “hold” on Scottish audiences); Ada Cavendish (with her great London success, *The New Magdalen*), and the absolutely incomparable Charles Mathews. What can I say of him that has not been said, or how convey a notion of his brilliance as a light comedian? He probably never had—and perhaps never will have—a rival in his own line of parts. His art was the essence of “art concealed,” and his naturalness was such that, in playing with him, until you got used to his method you positively could not distinguish if he were casually chatting with you or speaking the words of his part. Indeed, this naturalness caused his failure, to a great extent, on his visit to America, where, outside the few central cities, the audiences and the Press declared he was not “*acting at all*, but just conducting himself as he would in his own room.” Remember, this was some years ago. He was not seen at his best in scenes of sentiment or pathos, but certainly for dexterity, aplomb, and splendidly marshalled and rehearsed (though apparently unconscious) humour I have never seen his equal and, frankly, I don’t expect to. It was (in one word) delicious. I had met him, personally, at





H. J. (HARRY) MONTAGUE

(See page 14)



CHARLES MATHIEWS

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Palgrave Simpson's reunions in London before his visit to Edinburgh. In the latter place I played in nearly every one of his light plays with him, and we became very firm friends. He was the most charming companion imaginable—full of fun, anecdote, and artistic recollection, and I rejoiced in his company, as everybody did who had the privilege of it.

One very funny incident occurred during his engagement at this time. He was travelling alone (Mrs. Mathews had remained in London), and such was his temperament that when awake he hated to be solitary, so he used to ask me round to his rooms to supper very frequently. Invitations which, it is needless to say, I eagerly accepted. One night he had given his landlord an order for the theatre to see him act. As we took our seats for supper, the said landlord hung about the table in an indefinite way, like a man who wants to say something, and the following little dialogue took place—

CHARLES MATHEWS : Well ! well ! did you come to the theatre ?

LANDLORD (*very Scotch, nervously handling the cruets, etc.*) : Yes, sirr ! I was at the theatre !

C. M. : Well, did you get a good seat ?

LANDLORD (*still very nervous*) : Yes, sirr ! I had a fine seat.

C. M. : Well, did you enjoy yourself, eh ?

LANDLORD : Weel, Mr. Mathews, I could scarcely keep frae laughing !

Those who remember Mathews and his mirth-provoking work will appreciate the point of this story. For ourselves, we kept our faces as well as we could till the landlord left the room, and then simply exploded with

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laughter. I told this story in after years to Charles Dickens, jun., who incorporated it in *The Life of Charles Mathews*, which he wrote and published.

Charles Mathews married twice. His first wife was the fascinating and beautiful (as well as clever) Madame Vestris, and a good story of a "Comedy Old Lady's" humour is told anent this. Madame Vestris was what is known nowadays as "a lady with a past"—and quite a good deal of it. When the wedding took place it was much too delicious a piece of scandal for the company at the Lyceum (where he had been playing with her) to let go by without some "spicy" comment. Said one member of the company in the Green Room before rehearsal: "Have you heard the news? Charles Mathews was married to Madame Vestris this morning." Said another: "Is it possible? Dear! dear! What a pity! What will his people say?" No. 1 replied: "They say she told him everything." No. 2 rejoined: "Well, that was frank and honest anyhow." First Old Lady (Mrs. Glover) from the corner: "Yes! and good gracious! what a memory!"

At this time neither husband nor wife had the least regard for the value of money, and both were frightfully extravagant, consequently Mathews was always in debt and—one can't say—difficulties, because nothing of that kind ever worried C. M. They seemed to go on the principle that if they paid nobody there could be no jealousy. Wondrous are the stories of his splendid audacity in dealing with angry creditors. On one occasion he was incarcerated for debt in a country gaol, and such was his persuasive magnetism that he went to the local races with the governor of the prison.

Another time a very irate dun forced his way into the office at the Lyceum, swearing he would not leave without his money. But he did, and when he came to his senses (outside) he discovered he had lent Mathews another £100.

One morning a very gruff, surly, angry man met C. M. on the doorsteps of his house at Kensington with the remark : " Mr. Mathews, you are the man I'm looking for." Mathews replied : " Really, how you startled me ! What's the matter ? " The surly one said : " Matter, Mr. Mathews, last quarter's rates is the matter ! Quite a trifle for a gentleman in your position. Eight pounds four shillings, and I've been here a dozen times after it, and I'm not coming again. I want the money here and now ! " Mathews looked at him quite surprised, and replied, airily : " God bless my soul ! Eight pounds four—for rates, and you've been here a dozen times after it. I should have thought it would have paid you better to have paid the money yourself."

On the occasion of his going to Australia he was tendered a farewell banquet, at which he proposed his own health in a marvellously humorous and witty speech.

Mr. Mathews married his second wife in America. This charming lady reigned as a great favourite amongst a large circle of friends for many years in London, and was the mother of Sir C. W. Mathews, a very popular and successful member of the English Bar, and the present well-known and able Director of Public Prosecutions.

If ever a man's amiable weaknesses and foibles were

offset by his delightful contributions to the gaiety of nations that man was Charles Mathews.

During my time in Edinburgh I made many sincere and pleasant friends, amongst them W. B. Hole (the Royal Scottish academician), whose paintings and etchings are so well known and valued, and whose noble work adorns some of the public institutions of Edinburgh in the form of frescoes, etc. Only a short time ago a beautiful exhibition was held in London of a large set of his pictures illustrative of the life of Christ, which was greatly admired and praised, and gave infinite pleasure to all, including the writer.

We had many confidences in our aspiring salad days of Art, and though in different branches it was very pleasant to be able to congratulate each other on working our way to the front.

Another valued friend in Edinburgh was the well-known lawyer (or Writer to the Signet), Kenmure Maitland. He was a clever literary man as well, and contributed frequently to the Scottish newspapers, and also wrote the Royal pantomimes. His son married Miss Wyndham. Very witty, with a fund of anecdote, he was one of the best raconteurs I have ever known. One of his fine stories was a little against himself, which he enjoyed. He was coming out of the *Scotsman* office one winter's night, and got to the head of a steep wynd (or alley). It had snowed and thawed and frozen again and again, and the pavement was like glass. As his feet touched the ground they flew from under him and he sat down violently, and slid down to some railings at the lower extremity of the alley. He got up with an exclamation of agony, and was paying sym-

pathetic attention to the part of his anatomy which had recently been his toboggan, when a little urchin rushed out of a doorway and said, "Mon, I ken't ye'd fa'. I fell tae !"

Probably one of the best of all my friends, though, was a perfectly splendid landlady. Dear old Mrs. Finlayson ! Nothing was ever a trouble to her, and I really think she had a genuine affection for me. Many a time when I was studying my parts hard into the night, she would come into my sitting-room at three, or even four o'clock, in the morning with a cup of appetising soup or broth, and say in her quiet way : " I brocht ye this, and I thoct it would be well for ye to gang awa' to your bed th' noo." But she had a tremendously Scotch reverence for the Sabbath, or shall I say, a tremendous respect for her neighbours' reverence for it. One Sunday night I had a little party of friends to dinner to help me eat some game which had been sent me. In my room was an old instrument which masqueraded as a piano. It was, in reality, a pretty good imitation of Thackeray's "rickety, ramshackle, wheezy spinet." One of my friends, who was musical, sat down to play it. In a minute Mrs. Finlayson was in the room, saying : " Mr. Barnes, I'd thank ye if ye would na play the music on the Sawbath." Of course, my friend stopped, and later in the evening quite inadvertently struck a note or two. Again she came in, saying, " Did I no' ask ye not to play the music on the Sawbath ?" I think I replied rather impatiently that there was no harm in it, and there was nothing else to do. She glided out of the room, and in a few moments glided back, saying, " My monny, I brocht ye twa packs o'



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cards ! ” Oh, bless her ! The neighbours did not hear them !

Just as the season was drawing to a close I got an offer from H. J. Byron to return to London for the opening of the new Criterion. Mrs. Wyndham suggested I should take a farewell benefit, which I did, playing Claude Melnotte in *The Lady of Lyons* to a very full and enthusiastic house and every possible demonstration of goodwill. With a big lump in my throat I made a little speech of farewell, and with a grateful heart and a little added capital closed as pleasant a time as I had ever known. I had not had a large salary. I did not want much in those days, but I had received instruction and assistance for which money could hardly pay, and had tried zealously to consider and follow the good advice given me. I had a sort of tacit understanding with Mrs. Wyndham to return to her next season, and at the time I fully intended to do so, but it was not to be. I was on the “crest of the wave” of success which was hurrying me on from one point to another with bewildering rapidity, and I had nothing to do but thankfully accept the good luck which continued to come my way.

## V

THE Criterion was opened on March 21, 1874, by Messrs. Spiers and Pond, the famous restaurateurs, under the direction of H. J. Byron. The restaurant, of which it formed a part, had been in full swing some time previously. The opening bill was a pleasant light comedy by Byron, entitled *An American Lady*. It was to have been supplemented by a short burlesque, or travesty, by W. S. Gilbert, entitled *Topsy-turveydom*, but the decorators, etc., were behind with their work, which made it impossible to get complete rehearsals, and it was decided to play only the comedy on the first night, postponing the burlesque to a few nights later. With plenty of capital to draw on, no expense was spared, and a most efficient company were engaged. Byron himself, John Clarke, David Fisher, the writer, Mrs. John Wood, Mrs. Gaston Murray, and Miss Jane Rignold formed quite a strong team for a slight though bright and pretty comedy. Of these well-remembered and well-graced comrades, only two are left—Mrs. John Wood and I. What a comedienne she was, and what a born humorist! With her beautiful complexion and her glorious black hair and dark eyes, as well as her splendid figure, she was the embodiment of radiant womanhood, which seemed to permeate the whole of her dramatic method. If she had a good line to speak,

or a good scene to play, how she would make it "go"! and how many a bad scene she has made to appear a good one by her dashing and hearty handling of it. She was another artist who drew money, irrespective of the play she was in. The public loved her for herself alone, and whether singing (inimitably) "His heart was true to Poll" in the burlesque of *My Poll and my Partner Joe*, or playing in comedy or drama, she was a host in herself. To her comrades on the stage she was a fountain of fun. Rehearsals in which she was concerned were positive holidays, and if (as in the case of *An American Lady*) she was associated with a wit like Byron, it was very difficult indeed to get to serious work at all. I could name more than one actress of to-day, earning a large salary, whose position is due entirely to as good an imitation as she can manage to give of Mrs. John Wood.

In *An American Lady*, a quip of Byron's provoked one of the biggest laughs I have ever heard in a theatre. It ran thus—

MRS. WOOD (*very emphatically*): Why, we Americans speak better English than you do!

BYRON: Do you, though?

MRS. WOOD: Of course, we do! Whose pronouncing dictionary is invariably considered the best? An American's? Webster! What have you got to say to Webster?

BYRON (*very quietly, almost demurely*): Walker!

I have been told that the ceiling of the Criterion is, or was, eighteen inches below the level of Piccadilly. Luckily it was not directly underneath, or the pavement might have been in danger at the shout of laughter which went up. Mrs. Wood was never happier than



*[Elliott and Fry*

*Photo]*

THE ORIGINAL CAST OF "THE AMERICAN LADY," WITH WHICH THE CRITERION THEATRE OPENED, 1874

From left to right: Top Row. David Fisher, J. H. Barnes, H. J. Byron and John Clarke  
Bottom Row. Miss Jane Rignold, Mrs. John Wood and Mrs. Gaston Murray

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when telling a good story, even against herself, and was at all times a thoroughly good-tempered, whole-hearted, womanly comrade, with whom it was a delight to work.

When W. S. Gilbert's burlesque *Topsy-turveydom* was produced after a few nights, that sweet singer, Miss Fanny Holland (Mrs. Arthur Law), made her first appearance on the regular theatrical stage, having been recruited from the German Reed entertainment at St. George's Hall. I spoke the first word (with the curtain up) on the Criterion stage, as I had done at the Londesborough, Scarborough—an odd (if trifling) coincidence—as it was within three years of my first appearance. The opening season at the Criterion was only moderately successful, and in the autumn of 1874 I had engaged myself, after consulting Mrs. Wyndham's wishes, to go to the Prince's, Manchester (then under the direction of that great stage manager, Charles Calvert), to open as Mercutio in a revival of *Romeo and Juliet*. But, once again, my great good luck stepped in to set that arrangement aside.

That admirable actor Charles Coghlan had settled to accompany Miss Adelaide Neilson to America as leading man. As the time approached, he repudiated and declined the engagement for some cause that I never learned. On the strength of Mrs. Wyndham's reputation as an instructress, and the quality of work I had done under her direction, I was sent for by John Ryder (Miss Neilson's teacher and general adviser), and asked if I was willing to rehearse some scenes for him, that he might judge if I was qualified for this important position. I cheerfully assented. After trying me in *Romeo*, *Orlando*, etc., he pronounced me capable and

satisfactory; he procured my release from my engagement with Calvert (with whom he had influence), and it was settled that I should accompany Miss Neilson to America as her leading support. Here was a "leg up" indeed! Truly, I was getting on!

I set to work with a will to qualify for my promotion, and in September sailed in the old s.s. *Russia* for New York. The *Russia* was then the crack boat of the Cunard fleet, and her captain (Captain Cook) the Commodore. Among the passengers was ex-Governor (of the State of New York) Hoffman, Sir Roderick Cameron, and Mr. William Schaus, a great art critic and judge of pictures, founder of the firm which, in later years, discovered the stolen Gainsborough picture "The Duchess of Devonshire." I had my first experience of a reading on board, in association with Miss Neilson, when a large sum of money was collected for the Seamen's Orphanage. I also had my first experience of sea-sickness, and a terrible one it was. Temporarily I regretted the engagement which had brought me to sea, and to the point where the future (if there was one) seemed to have nothing in store. However, it is the illness we most easily forget, and once in New York a new life opened up to me, full of interest, variety, and charm, which I ask permission to describe a little before continuing my purely professional notes.

Progress has been so rapid in the United States that even I can hardly realise a New York with no elevated railway, with Delmonico's at the corner of 14th Street and 5th Avenue, the "Lotos" Club in a little house in Irving Place, next door to the Academy of Music and 23rd Street, considered, if anything, too far up town for a location of a theatre. Yet that was

the city as I first knew it, a place of infinite delight and hospitality and kindness. I was made an honorary member of the Lotos, New York, Union, and Union League clubs, and courtesies were shown me on every side. At the Lotos the late greatly respected and admired Ambassador to Great Britain, the Hon. Whitelaw Reid, then editor (only) of *The Tribune*, had just been elected President, and was a frequent visitor. Here, in the afternoon, one might foregather with (amongst others) John Brougham, Bronson Howard, Billy Florence, J. T. Raymond, E. A. Sothern, Barney Williams, Mark Smith, "Uncle" Dan Bixby, William Winter, A. C. Wheeler ("Nym Crinkle"), E. Carroll, etc., and what delightful times they were! John Brougham was a witty, happy Irishman, with a budget of fine stories, which he told splendidly. He did not need an income—his popularity was such that he could pass his whole time as a guest of one or another of his numerous friends. It was said at the time, that, apart from the plays which bear his name, he had not a little to do with the writing of *London Assurance*. I do not know if it was true, and I give it for what it is worth, but it was often referred to in his presence, and I never heard of his contradicting it. From what I remember of him, I should be inclined to think he was far too honourable and punctilious a man to have "sailed under false colours" in such a matter.

Referring for a moment to *London Assurance* it must have often struck people who have seen or studied the play as a strange incongruity that Sir Harcourt Courtley goes all through it, as an old roué and libertine (in every way unworthy), and then speaks the honest man's



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“ Tag ” at the end. My old friend of years ago, Horace Wigan, a well-read man and one well versed in theatrical matters, gave me the following explanation of this :— When William Farren (the elder) was in the zenith of his fame and the play was first produced at Covent Garden, he (William Farren) absolutely refused, at one of the last rehearsals, to play the part of Sir Harcourt, unless he spoke the tag. Hence the apparent glaring anomaly ! It would seem that even in those days professional jealousy was not unknown.

To return to the Lotos Club. I have known it in four locations—Irving Place, two different positions on 5th Avenue, and its present palatial home in 57th Street. In all of them I have had the privilege of visiting membership, and have received at each innumerable marks of friendship and goodwill. Whitelaw Reid was a tower of strength, especially when presiding at the banquets tendered from time to time to distinguished visitors. A graceful, eloquent speaker, he had that touch of human nature which makes the whole world kin, and he was greatly missed at the club, I fancy, when his numerous and higher duties drew him perforce in other directions. Bronson Howard was the distinguished dramatist, author of *Saratoga* (known in England as *Brighton*), and a very fine American war-play *Shenandoah*, not seen in England, why, I can never understand. He wrote many other good plays. E. A. Sothorn was, of course, the original Lord Dundreary, that wonderful chap who said the wisest things in the manner and make-up of the veriest fool. Sothorn was also the original (and a splendid) David Garrick. Mark Smith was a prominent member of Wallack's Theatre

Company. Barney Williams and his wife, distinguished Irish comedians, came to England years before and made a pleasing success. Mr. and Mrs. "Billy" Florence did the same later. Mrs. Barney Williams and Mrs. "Billy" Florence were sisters. Uncle Dan Bixby (unattached) was a kind fellow, always doing some service for his friends, and never happier than at such times. William Winter is, happily, still with us, living in well-earned comparative retirement at his pleasant home on Staten Island, New York Harbour. He recently published a charming book of reminiscences. For the best part of his later life (many years) he was the dramatic critic of the New York *Tribune*, as well as the writer of many delightful books of poems and wanderings in England. His pen and mental force could always be found on the side of what was good, noble, and worthy, to the exclusion of what was false, meretricious and ignoble, and the actor's calling loses a firm friend and champion by his withdrawal from public life. A. C. Wheeler ("Nym Crinkle") was the critic of the New York *World* in those days—very clever and capable, and also very sarcastic and acid on occasion. Ned Sothorn had a mania for practical jokes, and would spend any amount of thought, time, or even money to perfect one. He and J. T. Raymond used to match (or toss) each other for a dollar whenever they met, and they had been known to do so by signs in a theatre when one was acting on the stage and the other seated in a private box.

## VI

MANY of Sothern's practical jokes became notorious in his day. One of his elaborate efforts in that direction was played on Billy Florence, and has, perhaps, not been freely recorded. It was as follows :—Billy Florence and Dion Boucicault had quarrelled violently and were bitter enemies. On one occasion when Mrs. Florence was ill a-bed, Billy came home and found a note on his hall table which ran thus—

“DEAR BILLY,

“Why did you not call and see me as you promised ?

“Yours ever,

“EMILY.”

Now Mrs. Billy, though a good sort, was inclined to be a little jealous ! As Florence knew no one named Emily, he cast about for an explanation, and his suspicions fell on Ned Sothern, and he proceeded to satisfy himself that he was right. In a frightful rage he wrote to Sothern saying something like this—

“DEAR SIR,

“You are no gentleman to play such a vile trick on a friend. Had your silly note fallen into other hands than mine, it might have caused endless trouble. You have taken an unwarrantable liberty, which I will

never forgive, and I beg that when we meet it may be as strangers.

“ Yours,

“ W. F.”

Next day he received a pleasant little chatty note from Sothern, saying—

“ DEAR BILLY,

“ I got an extraordinary note from you this morning. Of course, I saw in a moment it was not intended for me, so I sent it to Boucicault !

“ Yours ever,

“ NED.”

Is not that “ I sent it to Boucicault ” delicious ?

Boucicault was never much of a club man. At that time he had a charming little flat over a French restaurant in 16th Street, just out of Union Square. He and several good fellows, including Harry Montague, Wright Sanford, W. H. Marston, sometimes Mark Twain, and occasionally Bret Harte and the writer used to meet at Delmonico's, where it was then situated, many nights in the week after work. Charlie Delmonico was a *persona grata* amongst us, enjoyed our society, and, although we had no understanding to the effect, he used to contrive that we had a room pretty much to ourselves. Here we passed some delightful hours, and here, too, many bright things were said to appreciative listeners. I remember Boucicault saying, apropos of playwriting : “ Ah ! when young men get tired of writing clever plays they may write successful ones ! ” That was thirty-nine years ago, and yet it is as true to-day as it was when it was uttered. How well the experienced actor knows that

*clever* play which he rehearses for five or six weeks and which, being outside the never-failing ring of human nature, is out of the bill and buried in two weeks' performance.

Another of Boucicault's sage dicta was anent the study of Shakespeare and the much-discussed hidden meanings that some people are constantly finding in his works. He said : " Never mind what he meant here, or what he meant there. You be content to read what he says, and as long as you live you will never discover anything stronger or more satisfying than what he (simply) says." How emphatically true !

The Union was about the foremost club of New York. It sheltered nearly all the New Yorkers of standing. I believe the only member of my calling who was ever elected a regular member was Lester Wallack, the successful actor and manager of that day. I was introduced by a very popular member, and made the acquaintance of many well-known men, who, one and all, showed me the utmost kindness and hospitality. Pierre Lorillard, the Belmonts, the Jeromes, W. H. Marston, Herman Oelrichs, Lester Wallack amongst them, and last, though not least, that wit and charming gentleman W. Travers (" Bill " Travers his intimates called him). This was a delightful friend indeed.

Mr. Travers was a native of Baltimore, who had settled in New York, and had much of the old-world courtesy and charm of the typical Southern gentleman. He had a marvellously ready wit ; and what gave great zest to all his many *bons mots*, he had a piquant, quaint little stutter. I wonder a collection has not been made of his many clever sayings. They were of frequent

occurrence, and would have made most amusing reading. On one occasion he went with some friends into the bar of the old Sinclair House on his way up town, and said to the bar tender : " I w-w-want some w-w-whisky." The bar tender put up the glasses and whisky bottle, and held on to the latter, saying : " Hold on ! Thirty-five cents, please ! " Travers looked at him disdainfully, and said at once : " W-w-what's your hurry ? Does it k-k-kill so d-d-darned quick ? "

Another time he went with his son-in-law, who was considering the purchase of an English terrier, to see the dog tried with some rats. Immediately the dog and rat came together in the pit the rat seized the terrier by the jaw, and the dog, unused to the game, went round yelping. Travers watched this unexpected development for some time, and then said quietly, " Johnnie w-w-why the d-d-deuce don't you b-b-buy the rat ? "

Mr. and Mrs. Travers were much attached, a perfect Darby and Joan ; but even with his wife he could not resist a joke. One night, on his coming home late from the club, Mrs. Travers was asleep. As he reached her bedroom, and was taking off his clothes to go to bed quietly, she woke up and said, " Oh, William, is that you ? " " Of course," said he, " w-w-who did you expect ? "

One more story of him. A. T. Stewart, the great dry goods merchant, on some occasion took the chair at a banquet in aid of a hospital. Stewart was not very popular. As he rose to address the assemblage they were not so quiet or attentive as he could wish, so he knocked loudly on the table with his knife. W. T., seated near, said loud enough to be heard, " C-c-cash ! "

Stories of him might be multiplied by the score, but we must return to our muttons. Before I began my engagement in New York I saw the acting at some of the theatres there; perhaps the most notable were performances of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Cardinal Wolsey and Queen Katharine, at Booth's, by George Vandenhoff (of Boston) and the famous Charlotte Cushman. Very interesting, indeed, but the gentleman, though a good elocutionist, was a stilted, unnatural actor of the very old school, and Miss Cushman was really only a ruin, although a magnificent one, it is true.

I opened as Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, with Miss Neilson as Beatrice, on October 29, 1874, at what is now the 14th Street Theatre. It was then called the Lyceum, and had been built for and opened by Charles Fechter, the French romantic actor, mentioned earlier in these notes. It bore the marks of his French taste. The decorations carried out the scheme of a large boudoir. In the following week I played Romeo, and although I did not set the Hudson on fire I was pronounced adequate, and something better, in both parts, and I set my foot pleasantly on the path which leads to "troops of friends."

And now what about Miss Neilson? She became such a tremendous fact in theatrical work on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in the United States, where she was almost a religion, that one has been and is constantly asked, Was she a great actress? Was she a genius?

First, let us consider what is genius. Macready said, "Genius meant hard work." If he was right, Neilson was a genius, very distinctly. Some one else said, "Genius was an infinite capacity for taking pains."

Neither definition appeals to me. Genius, as I understand it, and have seen it in three, four, or five instances in my life on the stage, is something God-given. Some moments of inspiration, great or small, which are not learnable nor attainable by work, but which, in their truth to nature, are all-compelling and carry the hearts of men and women along with them with an irresistible force. In this regard Neilson was not a genius, but she was a good, in some moments, a great actress. All that work could do she did; but I arrive at the above conclusion by the following applied test:—I rehearsed three parts with her under John Ryder, with whom she studied all her legitimate rôles, and until her death she scarcely altered an intonation of a sentence from the way she had read it with him. She worked so hard and threw such an amount of earnestness into her work that many thousands of onlookers took for genius what was really splendidly marshalled force.

One quite extraordinary gift she had, namely, that of tears! At any given moment or cue she could make the tears mount to her eyes, and even run down her cheeks, irrespective of anything she was feeling at the time. It almost resembled the turning on of a tap!

Undoubtedly, she had great beauty, wonderful eyes, and an expressive mouth, fine colouring of complexion and hair, and a rather spare figure. Her appearance suggested a woman of Spanish or Italian type.

She made her first appearance on the stage in London in 1865, after a long course of lessons under John Ryder, and succeeded almost from the very first.

When she became famous all kinds of romantic stories were told of her Spanish origin, etc.; indeed, I have



heard her refer to her mother at Saragossa. As a matter of fact, she was born of humble parents in a village in Yorkshire in 1848, and her real name was Elizabeth Ann Brown. In her youth she was by turns a mill hand at Guiseley (Yorks), a nursemaid, and a barmaid; so the strenuous life she must have led to raise herself to the position she eventually attained may be imagined. All honour to her for her perseverance, say I.

She was a curious mixture of good impulses and waywardness, a good friend, but a little fiend if "rubbed the wrong way." Heaven help the manager, or, indeed, any one, who offended her. She was quite merciless either in business or otherwise if she were thwarted or annoyed. She was most unfortunate in her marriage, or perhaps she might have been more amenable and considerate. She married the son of an English clergyman when she was just reaching her big position, and I am afraid that it was impossible to regard Phil Lee as either a good husband or a man of strong character. What a difference this makes to a woman! What a number of women I have met on the stage and off whose lives and characters have turned for good or ill on this all-important point. Phil Lee was the victim of one of Ned Sothern's great practical jokes. A party of four or five, including the two named, were dining in New York, when, on some trivial pretext—if I remember rightly, the passing of the mustard—an apparently fearful quarrel was worked up, ending with revolvers and knives being freely brandished by all except Lee, who, frightened to death, got behind a door and asked Sothern, as the host, to be allowed to go home. When I met Miss Neilson she and Lee had drifted completely apart.

Admiration was the breath of her nostrils, and she would flirt for mere amusement. Sometimes this habit got her into difficulties. In St. Louis one elderly man connected with the Press, believing himself aggrieved, and under the influence of much alcoholic refreshment, made himself terribly obnoxious, and expressed his intention of shooting quite a number of people, including Miss Neilson and himself, until the police were consulted and he was temporarily taken care of.

## VII

OUR tour was under the management of Max Strakosch, the operatic *entrepreneur*. We travelled with a business manager only, playing with stock companies in the various cities. And what admirable companies many of them were ! Some of the best all-round leading men I have ever met ! James O'Neil in Chicago, Milnes Levick in Baltimore, Natt Lingham in Louisville, W. E. Sheridan in Philadelphia, among others. A curious incident occurred in Baltimore. The play was *As You Like It*. Milnes Levick played Jaques, and had spoken the Seven Ages speech very finely, gaining tremendous applause at the end. Miss Neilson (as far as I know without intent) said, "Go on, go on," and the scene was taken up before the applause died down. The audience got annoyed and seemed to feel that it was being treated scurvily, and kept up the applause in a manner which stopped the play. Miss Neilson ordered the curtain to be rung down, and then the storm burst out. It became a battle royal between her and the audience, who simply declined to listen to a word until Mr. Levick had repeated the speech. A silly scene, which might have been avoided, but became an absolute deadlock, out of which there was only one way. The audience was master of the situation.

I remember that during our tour we met one very fine comedian and character actor, Mr. Ben de Bar, manager of the Grand Opera House, St. Louis. A tall man, of large proportions, with a full face, out of which he had the power of taking every possible expression. His performance of *Dogberry* was admirable. When he opened his first scene with the line : " Are you good men and true ? " and also later in the line : " Is our whole dissembly appeared ? " his face expressed nothing more than a blank wall. His *Touchstone*, too, was excellent. I heard, at the time, that his *Falstaff* was also very fine, but I did not see it.

During the tour, Miss Neilson fell ill in New Orleans, and had to forego her engagement there, and we came through to New York for a fortnight's rest. This gave me the opportunity of being present at the first performance of Boucicault's play, *The Shaughraun*, which was a great delight. Its triumph was complete, and the cast (amongst whom were many friends) was one of the best that I ever saw. I also saw during that rest George Rignold in Calvert's production of *Henry V.* at Booth's theatre. This was another notable performance, which went over all the world, and made Rignold a deservedly rich man. He finally settled in Australia (with occasional visits to England), where he died, much respected and beloved, only last year.

Another fine actor I saw at this time was Mr. E. L. Davenport, father of Miss Fanny Davenport, and husband of the English actress, Miss Fanny Vining, a beautiful actor of great power and versatility. I have often heard Americans express the opinion that Davenport

was about the best *all round* actor they had ever produced, and I should be prepared to accept the statement. He more nearly resembled my ideal, Samuel Phelps (of whom much more hereafter), than any one I have seen before or since. His Shylock, Sir Giles Overreach, William (*Black-Eyed Susan*), among other parts, were great performances.

Our first visit to Philadelphia was to Mrs. John Drew's theatre, the Arch Street, and there the popular John Drew played with us, and his sister Georgie—afterwards Mrs. Barrymore—made her first appearance on the stage as Hero (*Much Ado About Nothing*). Thus both Barrymore and his wife made their first appearance with me. She became a capital actress, and was a humorist of the first water.

Our return visit to Philadelphia was to the Walnut Street Theatre, and there, during our stay, we produced for the first time on the American continent, as far as we could ascertain, *Measure for Measure*. It was an unqualified success. Miss Neilson gave an admirable performance of Isabella, and looked a goddess in the nun's costume, the veil proving most becoming to her cast of features. W. E. Sheridan was excellent as the Duke Vincentio, as also were Charles Walcot and his wife (English players), as Angelo and Mariana. Lindsay Harris was a capital Lucio, and I think I scored as Claudio.

The Walnut Street Theatre was owned by John S. Clarke, well known in England as in America. He was brother-in-law of Edwin Booth, who was playing an engagement in Baltimore (near by) at the time, and who



J. H. BARNES AS CLAUDIO  
("Measure for Measure")

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closed his theatre at his own expense, and came over to Philadelphia to be present at our first performance. Neilson included the part of Isabella in her repertory from then until the time of her death. Her trump card was, of course, Juliet, and, eminently successful as the season was, it would have been more so if she would have consented to play that part more often, or even every night. At a *matinée* in St. Louis, when *Romeo and Juliet* was the programme, one of the newspapers, as a matter of curiosity, undertook to count the number of females present—2,760 passed the doors, not counting males. This was easily a record up to that time. Amongst the audience were many ladies' schools. And yet, in my personal judgment, it was not her best performance. Her Juliet seemed to me just to lack something of the quality that one wanted to find in the scion of a noble house. It conveyed more the notion of a beautiful young woman of another class. I used to think that if we could have had a Juliet of Neilson's force and Mrs. Scott Siddons's breeding, the ideal of the author would have been just about realised. Each of them lacked what the other had.

No ! Miss Neilson's very finest efforts were in parts and scenes of strongly theatrical power, written for theatrical effect. Her Pauline in *The Lady of Lyons* was admirable, and as Julia, in *The Hunchback*, her "Do it ! nor leave the act to me !" was really very fine indeed.

This engagement was for me a very arduous one, as, in addition to playing a long leading part every evening and at least one *matinée* a week, I had to conduct a



rehearsal nearly every morning (Miss Neilson rarely attended these rehearsals), and over and above all this there was the ever-present danger of her differences with the local managers, which had to be bridged over—not always so easy! The work did not bother me. I thrived on work in those days, and by the exercise of a good deal of diplomacy I somehow managed to keep on pleasant, friendly terms with my star, whilst doing my very best to serve the manager who paid my salary, and I always got on well with the various theatre managers and their several companies. Alas! it fell out that our very last week brought about a marked change in this condition of affairs. The tour ended at Toronto (a return visit). It so happened that I had done a good deal of rowing in England in the previous three years and had been, thereby, brought in contact with many foremost amateur athletes. Some of these had migrated to Canada and settled in Toronto. They rallied round me, as only Englishmen in the Colonies know how to. Amongst my greatest friends was a very clever man, T. C. Patteson, who had founded and was then editor of the *Toronto Mail*. He vied with many others in their efforts to give me a good time. It fell out that in our last week Miss Neilson announced a farewell benefit, which really had no business significance, but was an opportunity for arousing a demonstration of enthusiasm. My friends seized on the idea (against which I protested with all the emphasis at my command) that I ought to have a benefit, too. Miss Neilson was consulted, without my knowledge, and she in turn was supposed to have taken the opinion of Strakosch (our manager) by tele-

gram. It was decided that it was not permissible—at which I was not a bit surprised—but the ball having been started it gained in size and velocity, and our last night, March 24, 1875, when we played *The Lady of Lyons*, was quite a scene of strong partisanship. Applause came equally for both of us in our efforts. It was really very embarrassing for me, and I could have well wished to have been “saved from my friends.” But there was no help for it! I endeavoured to explain to Miss Neilson, but she was furious and I don’t think she ever had a more dramatic moment than when she said at the end—with her fine eyes flashing volumes of indignation—“I’ll never speak to you again as long as I live.” As a matter of fact, she only did once more. Coming out of a London theatre two or three years after, we met face to face, when she perfunctorily passed the usual pleasantries, and I never saw her again. I was greatly grieved and shocked to hear of her tragically sudden death in Paris in 1880. She had always suffered from dyspepsia, and had rather ignored it by often sitting up late and eating heavy suppers. In Paris, on a very hot day, it was said she drank two large glasses of milk and soda in quick succession, which stopped the heart’s action and she died practically before aid could be summoned. She lies in Brompton Cemetery, where a beautiful stone marks her last home which, after the usual inscription, bears the word of so much moment in the actor’s life: “Resting.”

So ended one of the most meteoric careers in all the romance of the English stage. At first blush it would appear a sad thing! But was it? She had tasted the

sweets of almost unprecedented honours. She passed in the fullness of her womanhood and at the zenith of her fame, and also when some very distinct annoyances were looming in the future for her. All her fine points and all her faults lie there with her, and the world, when it recalls her at all, remembers only her greatness and her goodness, and happily forgets all else ! By her will Miss Neilson left one thousand pounds to Clement Scott and Joseph Knight ; one thousand pounds to Mr. Edward Compton (still with us), her last leading man, and the balance of her fortune went to an old and dear friend, Admiral Carr Glyn, who endowed with it a fund for certain needy actors.

The manageress of the Grand Opera House, Toronto, was a Mrs. Morrison, who had been a Miss Nickerson, daughter of an old and respected actor. She was in great favour with the very popular Governor-General of that day, Lord Dufferin. She was a most admirable business woman as well as a very capable actress and a kind, considerate friend to many people, including myself. She persuaded me that I had created sufficient interest in Toronto to warrant my trying two weeks "starring" there on my own account in modern plays. This I did, playing *The Romance of a Poor Young Man*, *Old Soldiers*, *Partners for Life*, etc., with a pleasant result both artistically and financially. After this I was engaged, at Boucicault's suggestion, to play Captain Molyneux in the first Canadian production of his play *The Shaughraun*. This was the part created in New York by Harry Montague. The play made a huge success in Toronto, and then I was still further retained

to play the lead with the beautiful Mrs. Rousby, an English star visiting America that year. She was indeed a lovely woman, but alas ! this was another case of a frightfully ill-assorted marriage, and one of the worst ! She had married, years before, quite a good actor in England, Wybert Rousby. Where the fault lay was a matter of opinion amongst those who professed to know. Perhaps there were faults on both sides, but certain it was they were completely and irrevocably estranged. I managed to get on very well with her (sometimes difficult) and she drew quite a good week's receipts in Toronto. At that time, as they do to-day, they liked an entertainment with the English stamp on it. I played with her, amongst other things, the romantic part of Edward Courtenay in Tom Taylor's *'Twixt Axe and Crown*, of which she was the original of her part in London, and I think one of the biggest and most prolonged roars of applause I ever heard in a playhouse was when I finished a passionate heroic speech with the line, " For England ! England's Queen ! and England's Law ! " It really seemed as if they would never stop applauding.

After Mrs. Rousby's engagement closed I had a week's tour of some smaller Canadian towns, accompanied by Mrs. Morrison, and then spent a few days in Toronto saying " good-bye " to a lot of as good friends as a man could ever expect to make away from home. I had many a lump in my throat as one and all wished me " God-speed ! " On the last Sunday night J. L. Toole and I walked and talked of old friends on the shore of Lake Ontario, and I bore all kinds of messages to his friends in England in anticipation of his return. He had been on

his first and only tour in America that same year, and we had met at odd times in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Toronto.

One of the prominent members of Mrs. Morrison's company in Toronto was a splendid old English actor, Mr. C. W. Couldock, who, years afterwards, created the leading part in *Hazel Kirke*, a play which ran at the Madison Square Theatre, New York, for years "off the reel." Apropos of this play, the late Henry Pettitt always insisted that it was taken from his English melodrama, *The Green Lanes of England*, and certainly the similarity was so extraordinary that if he was not justified in his contention the long arm of coincidence was quite unusually *en evidence*.

Passing through New York I saw a very fine performance of *The Two Orphans* at the Union Square Theatre there, under the management of A. M. Palmer. I had seen the play in Paris and London previously, but the New York performance was by far the best. It was a strong cast—Charles Thorne, McKee Rankin, Stuart Robson, F. F. MacKay, James Stoddart, Fanny Morant, Ida Vernon, Kate Claxton, Kitty Blanchard, etc. McKee Rankin was especially fine as Jacques.

I sailed home by the s.s. *Britannic* (Capt. Thompson) on May 29, 1875, and reached London on June 8. I saw my first iceberg on the way, and many of them. One of the letters I bore home from J. L. Toole was to a member of the club called "The Knights of the Round Table," held at Simpson's, in the Strand. The result of this introduction was that I was elected a member of that club, and remained so for many years. It was not very

much of a club, but rather a coterie of jolly old friends who had the run of Simpson's fine English food and Simpson's fine cooking in a good, large, private room. Many actors and managers belonged to it, amongst them Henry Irving, David James, Thomas Thorne, John Hollingshead and others. We had the largest round table in the world made from a single piece of wood. It was in the great Exhibition of 1851—a solid piece of mahogany at which some sixteen members could sit and dine with ease. Here some kind genial old friends used to meet most days, and on Saturdays a goodly number would amuse one another with impromptu concerts, etc., and many happy times were spent. The president of the club in my day was John Christopher Pawle, a London solicitor (father of Mr. Lennox Pawle, the present-day actor), but the moving spirit was that kindly, good-natured Englishman, E. W. Cathie, managing director and practical proprietor of Simpson's. A better fellow never lived, and when I say he reminded me greatly of my own good father, to whom I have alluded in my opening chapter, it may be gathered how strong was my affection for him and with what sadness I received the news of his sudden death when I was on one of my tours in America some years after. I believe the club and the round table are still at Simpson's, but I have not seen either for some years. Here David James gave his dinner to celebrate the 1,000th night of the run of Byron's *Our Boys*, and one of the old members, George Ledger, brother of the founder of the *Era* and uncle of the late proprietor of that paper, used to show with great pride the voucher for the seat he occupied

at Edmund Kean's last appearance in London. What a wonder Edmund Kean must have been ! George Ledger said to me once : " It is true, my boy, that he was only five feet six and a-half inches in height, but, by Heaven, I have seen him when he seemed ten feet high ! "

## VIII

THE autumn of 1875 found me at the Royal, Manchester, under special circumstances. A powerful and wealthy syndicate had been formed to take over the theatre from the estate of the previous manager (John Knowles) and run it on first-class lines. There was any amount of capital at the back of the scheme, and their ambition aimed as high as to form a company such as could go to London, even, as the Manchester Theatre Royal Company. Manchester has always been a fertile ground for local theatrical enterprise (witness the success, in recent years, of the management of that astute and clever lady Miss Horniman). The proprietors in 1875 were unfortunate in their choice of a manager. Mr. William Sidney was a man of great experience, but principally gained in smaller towns such as Norwich, etc., and he seemed quite incapable of "reaching out" as the syndicate would have liked. His successor, Alfred Thompson, was extravagant enough for anything, but his talent lay chiefly in the production of pantomime and extravaganza, and his purely dramatic capability was not what was required in the instance mentioned; so by degrees the gentlemen interested, finding their hopes unrealised, got tired of their enterprise, and the theatre drifted back to the ordinary level of provincial houses. It was a great pity and a great chance missed.

We opened on September 4, 1875, with a great flourish



of trumpets. Everything was new and bright and well done. The opening play was *As You Like It*, with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal as Rosalind and Orlando. I played Jaques. During their visit the Kendals produced several of the plays in their repertory, and we did very good business indeed. I wonder if Mr. Kendal remembers how near he was to death during our early rehearsals? A counterweight of the drop-curtain became detached from its rope, which was new, and fell, just touching his arm, crashing right through two floors! After the Kendals, we produced with our own specially selected company Tom Taylor's fine play *Lady Clancarty*, and in this I was very fortunate in getting on good terms with my public and greatly pleasing my proprietors. Our company was quite a strong one, and included as good an all-round leading lady as I have ever seen—a much better actress than one-half the so-called stars—Miss Louise Willes. Unfortunately, she was not beautiful, but such was her marked intellectuality that I have seen her look very positively bewitching when her brain shone through her work. She was an artist to her finger-tips. Nothing came amiss to her. She played *Lady Clancarty* beautifully. She was a splendid *Lady Teazle*, and her *Lady Macbeth* and *Ophelia*, etc., were worthy of all praise. I am sorry to remember she died “unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung,” without her great merits having been fully recognised. She had been in poor health for some time previously.

After *Lady Clancarty*, which did fine business, we had a fortnight's visit of Mr. and Mrs. Bandmann! Only moderately successful. Bandmann was a tragedian who hailed from Germany. He was certainly not of the first





SAMUEL PHELPS

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water, but an adept in the gentle art of making himself disliked by his fellow-artists through a painfully overbearing manner.

And then came the event which was to mark an epoch in my career and a red-letter time in my life, which I have never failed to look back on with feelings of the greatest interest and pride. Samuel Phelps came to us as a star to play several of his great parts, and for the first time I met the man who was to have an influence on all my future life, and not only compel my positive worship of himself, but strengthen in a marked degree my respect for the art to which he and I had the honour to belong, in showing me its nobler side and its far-reaching influence for good and evil when employed in truthfully "holding the mirror up to nature." By many actors of the modern school, whose reverence is not their strongest point, I have been thought quite mad in my worship of Samuel Phelps. Well, I plead guilty, as they understand that worship. I have never seen such an actor! I am also more than ordinarily familiar with stage history, and I can find no record of such an actor! Let me hasten to explain this last statement. He played more parts and a wider range of parts—well, than any actor who ever spoke the English language. I should not claim for Phelps that he could play Othello or Richard III., or even Shylock, as well as Edmund Kean, or Lear as well as Forrest, or Abel Drucker as well as Garrick, or Coriolanus as well as John Philip Kemble. All these and many others unnamed have left reputations in one, two, three, or even six parts, but Phelps's reputation rests on sixty—and more. For eighteen years—from 1844 to 1862—he

conducted Sadler's Wells Theatre. He produced there thirty-four of Shakespeare's plays, and his list of other productions and parts played is practically a list of every great play in the language. He changed his programme every week, fortnight, or month, as required, and drew all London to what was an outlying theatre to see his work. All this time Charles Kean, under the direct patronage of the Queen and Royal Family, was doing fine work at the Princess's, but the great heart of the public was with Phelps at Sadler's Wells. If this is questioned, speak to any white-haired playgoer about any one of the great classic plays and you will be met by some such remark as this : " Ah, I have not seen that play since Sam Phelps produced it at Sadler's Wells, and I don't want to see any one else in it." This sort of statement is his monument, and, to the disgrace of London be it said, his only one. Apart from his own individual acting his ideas of our art were all broad and grand. Nothing little or narrow-minded found a place in his nature. To paraphrase what Disraeli said of his wife : " To know him was a liberal education," and to talk with him on any play or theatrical subject was an intellectual treat. On the stage he was fairness itself, and he would (and did, constantly) show any one who was in earnest how to make the most of his part, even when it would seem to score against himself. From the first hour of my acquaintance with him I was fortunate in apparently winning his esteem and regard. He seemed never tired of showing me how I could improve my performances, and we became great friends, and when, alas ! I followed him to his last resting-place on that dull November day in 1878, and saw London standing

respectfully bareheaded for miles as we passed, I knew that many thousands of people (including myself) had lost a friend whose artistic endeavours had amounted to genuine benefactions, and whose particular niche in their regard could not, and has not since, been quite filled. In private life he was a devoted father, who lived for his home and the love of his children (he had been a widower for years) and his art. In the course of my life I have never met an artist in any profession whose ideals were higher and whose sympathies were broader. He was in no sense a society man. He had not the time. His one holiday was usually spent in fishing in the shires, and an amusing story is told of a country farmer and his wife seated in the pit at Sadler's Wells, and when Phelps came on the stage the farmer turned to his wife and said, "Betsy, I'm d——d if it ain't the old fisherman." One of the few of the public who had ever seen him in private!

In Manchester I played with him in *John Bull*, *Richelieu*, *The Man of the World*—in which he was magnificent as Sir Pertinax MacSycophant—and finally we produced on a scale of much magnificence *The School for Scandal*. It is possible that this was the most elaborate and costly production of this play ever seen. We used the same models as had been employed at the Prince of Wales's under Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft's management, but, of course, in the splendid area of the Royal, Manchester, the effect was bigger and finer. All the costumes were new and handsome. I should be afraid to say what was the worth of the genuine Queen Anne silver (lent by Mr. Agnew, one of the directors), which I had in my supper scene as Charles Surface, but it was

very valuable indeed. Phelps played Sir Peter Teazle, Miss Willes Lady Teazle, Miss Margaret Cooper Lady Sneerwell, John Wainwright Joseph Surface, and the writer Charles Surface. All the other parts had good exponents. The whole thing was a very big success indeed—individually and collectively—and drew splendid houses. I was very fortunate in consolidating my position in the town and theatre. The public and my managers made a great fuss of me, and, what was most gratifying of all to me, dear old Mr. Phelps went out of his way to be particularly complimentary. Altogether it was one of my happiest experiences.

Mr. Phelps had a fund of humour, and used to tell some stories inimitably. One good one was of his coming out of Sadler's Wells one night with a large bandana silk handkerchief (as used in those days) hanging far out of his pocket. Two little pickpockets were following him to steal it, when, just as one of them was about to grab it, the other said, "'Ere, Bill, don't operate on 'im; 'e's a brother pro." Another story he delighted in was of a performance of Bulwer Lytton's *Money* in Sheffield. In the Club scene, where the Old Member says nothing but "Waiter! snuffbox!" at frequent intervals, it so got on the nerves of a man in the gallery that, after three or four repetitions, he called out in broad Yorkshire dialect, "Hey! give t'oud fool snuff-box, and let him put it in t'is pocket and let t' play go on."

In 1876 Alderman Cotton was elected Lord Mayor of London, and during his year of office a luncheon was given at the Mansion House to the dramatic profession. I believe it was the first public recognition of our calling

within the city proper. There were only two toasts—"The Queen" and "The Drama," coupled with the name of Samuel Phelps. He rose to respond, and his opening words were these:—"My Lord Mayor, ladies and gentlemen,—I am sixty-three years of age—forty-three years of which have been spent in the service of the public as an actor, and it may interest you to know that this is practically the first time I have ever addressed a word to an audience which has not been set down for me by the author." And so it was! No speeches, no paragraphs, no interviews, no photographs, no bunkum of any sort! Just honest, straightforward work for the public when the curtain was up. I don't think any words ever affected me so strongly. Here, good reader, was my text and my sermon in one! This very speech caused the resolve on my own part that I would try to follow in his footsteps in these particulars (to which I alluded in my opening chapter), and when the time comes for those left behind to speak of me I ask no better eulogy than the words, "according to his lights, he faithfully followed the teaching of his great and chosen master."

After the Phelps engagement at Manchester (the season was nearly over) the Grand Opera Company came to the theatre and the dramatic company moved to the Amphitheatre, Liverpool, and the Royal, Sheffield. For these two dates we were strengthened by the addition of Mr. T. C. King, a well-known and well-liked provincial "star," whom I had met the previous year in America, as also in London, where he had made several pronounced successes, notably as Quasimodo in *Notre Dame*. He was the possessor of a magnificent voice—deep, full, and



resonant. Indeed, he had been so much congratulated on it during his life that it had been almost a disadvantage from the fact that he had come to use only his rolling, fine lower chest notes for every part and scene, sometimes at the expense of naturalness. In rugged parts he was excellent—a splendid Ingomar, a good Othello, and a fine William—*Black-Ey'd Susan*. The season in Manchester ended just before Christmas, and I returned to London.

## IX

JANUARY, 1876, found me back on an old stalking-ground—the Royal, Edinburgh, which had been burnt down during my tour in America, and was now rebuilt and reopened under the management of J. B. Howard, who had preceded me as leading man under Mrs. Wyndham. For the opening he had secured the first performance, in the provinces, of Boucicault's immensely successful play, *The Shaughraun*. It was well produced and cast. The company included Mr. and Mrs. Hubert O'Grady, J. D. Beveridge, Thomas Nerney, myself, the beautiful Rose Massey, and a sweetly pretty little lady, Miss Eveleen Rayne ("Mickey Ryan" she was called amongst her friends), a daughter of Desmond Ryan, for many years musical critic of the *London Standard*. Boucicault had cabled to Chatterton whilst I was on my voyage home from America to engage me for the part of Captain Molyneux for the original production of the play in England at Drury Lane, but William Terriss was on his staff and salary list, so he did not do so. It was pleasant, therefore, that Boucicault engaged me himself when the matter was in his own hands. The play ran six and a-half weeks in Edinburgh—an almost unprecedented run in those days—to enormous houses. O'Grady could not compare with Boucicault as Conn; but, then, nobody could, and as the provinces had not

seen the great original he satisfied them very well in what is known in the profession as an "actor-proof" part. Rose Massey was splendid as Claire Folliott, Beveridge excellent as Corry Kinchells, Nerney made a "hit" in Shiel Barry's part of Harvey Duff, and Miss Rayne was a deliciously piquant and pretty Moya. This was a great achievement, as it was her first appearance on the stage, but she had been beautifully coached by the sweet original (in London), Mrs. Boucicault.

From Edinburgh we went in turn to Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and other large towns. Everywhere we played to crowded houses. I left the company in April to return to London under engagement to Horace Wigan at the Princess's for a play called *Abel Drake*, by Tom Taylor and John Saunders, which failed hopelessly. John Clayton played the leading part. I played a heavy part, but the play was doomed from the first line apparently. As a stop-gap we revived *The Lady of Lyons* and *The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*, Miss Coghlan playing the leading female part with me in each. She was an admirable actress, with great glow and humanity in her work. As soon as it could be got ready we followed this with a good revival of *The Corsican Brothers*. It had been produced originally in the same theatre by Charles Kean, and was a very favourite play there. John Clayton played Louis and Fabian de Franchi, and I played Chateau Renaud. We were both good swordsmen, and we carefully rehearsed a very interesting duel under Mr. McTurk, who was the successor of "Angelo," of St. James's Street, and it was not an uncommon thing for some of the officers of regiments quartered in London

and others interested in swordsmanship, to come to the Princess's after dining to see the fight alone. Let me here observe (parenthetically) what a very useful thing it is for all young actors to learn fencing and dancing if they have the energy and the chance. Apart from their absolute use on necessary occasions, which are not as frequent now as in the old days, they are invaluable in giving grace and carriage and bearing at every and all times on the stage. We still retained *The Sheep in Wolf's Clothing* in the bill. Miss Coghlan played Ann Carew therein, and Miss Caroline Hill played the leading part in *The Corsican Brothers*. Horace Wigan, the manager, was a delightful man—well-read and genial, though with an apparently surly exterior. He was a brother of Alfred Wigan, who was a popular and successful actor—the original John Mildmay (*Still Waters Run Deep*), and the original Chateau Renaud in England. Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Wigan had a considerable vogue as “stars” for some years about that time. Funny stories are told of her. She became badly bitten with the “Society craze,” and although not born to it, she gave herself considerable trouble in assuming the airs and graces of the *beau monde*. On one occasion she was congratulated on a pretty shawl she was wearing, and she blandly observed: “Yes! There are only two like this in England! ‘Vicky’ has the one and I have the other!” This “chatty” allusion to Her Majesty Queen Victoria was quite a little gem in its way. She got a sad “calling down” once from that fine actress, Mrs. Stirling. Mrs. Wigan, in early life, had been a stilt-walker in a circus. None the worse for that, perhaps, but she chose (as many others have done) to

forget and ignore the past. On one occasion she was rehearsing at the old Olympic, when she and Mrs. Stirling came to loggerheads about the setting of some furniture in a drawing-room scene. After a somewhat heated argument, Mrs. Wigan (much forgetting) said : " My dear ! I hope you'll allow me to know as much about drawing-room furniture as you do. I expect I have seen quite as many drawing-rooms as you have ! " Mrs. Stirling (much remembering) said : " Doubtless, love ! Through the first-floor window ! "

In August, 1876, I commenced a short engagement as Sir Leicester Deadlock in *Jo*, J. P. Burnett's version of *Bleak House*, in which his wife, Miss Jennie Lee, made an enormous success, and with which she went all over the world. I also created the leading part in a farce entitled *The Way of the Wind*, by Wallis MacKay, the original " Captious Critic " of the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, when it started. His inimitable drawings with their clever and delicate sense of caricature did much to establish the success of that paper. In October, 1876, I was at the Park Theatre, Camden Town, which stood in Park Street, nearly opposite the Britannia, and has long since been pulled down to make room for business premises. The play was called *The Ray of Light*, and was a version of the French *L'Aveugle*, by Dennery. A very fine story of the kind in vogue at that time. It was under the management of Mr. William Creswick (former manager of the Surrey, in partnership with Richard Shepherd). A version of the play had been done there called *The Humpbacked Doctor*. Creswick played the doctor. I played a blind part, and added a small mark to my reputation and an

addition to the number of my friends among the public. Creswick was a dear old gentleman—a brother of Creswick, the great painter—genial and kindly, but with one amiable little foible. He was as vain as a little child, in a cheery, harmless way. Absolutely alike in everything he did, he was, nevertheless, quite a good actor when his personality was fitted. He once said to me : “ I have often had a desire to play Polonius and The Ghost and The Gravedigger in *Hamlet*. I would have given such individuality to each.” Now, this was just what he could not do, but with “ my tongue in my cheek ” I replied : “ Well, why did you not do it, sir, when you had the Surrey ? You had the Shakespearean ‘ ball at your feet ’ there.” Without a moment’s hesitation he answered : “ I should have done so, but for the difficulty in finding any one to play Hamlet ! ”

Creswick was the baldest man I ever saw. His head was like a misshapen billiard ball, and he wore the very wiggist of black wigs. When the Shakespeare centenary was held at Stratford-on-Avon it was considered necessary to have an actor present who was prominently associated with Shakespearean performances, and the choice fell on Creswick as the best available at the time. After all the big ceremonies, extending over a week, a banquet was held under the presidency of Mr. Flowers, the Mayor. He was a local brewer of wealth, and had taken a foremost part in the movement which culminated in such gratifying success. Creswick sat on his right hand. The toast of “ The Queen ” was honoured and the “ Immortal memory of Shakespeare ” drunk in respectful silence. And the toast of “ The Chairman ” was proposed in suitable terms. Mr. Flowers rose to

respond. In the course of his speech he said : " Ladies and Gentlemen,—You may well say my life is bound up with the town of Stratford-on-Avon. I worship the memory of Shakespeare and I love the town which gave him birth. Nearly all my life has been spent here. When I first came to Stratford-on-Avon my hair was as raven black as my old friend Creswick's here ! " At that moment he grabbed Creswick's wig, which came off in his hand, disclosing a very bald head, to the discomfiture of the wearer and the hilarious mirth of everybody else.

These were the days of the " Albion," which was situated just opposite Drury Lane, and has long since disappeared, where many actors, authors, managers, and Press men could be seen at supper almost every night—Chatterton, Webster, Edmund Falconer, Byron, Halliday, George Honey, John Clarke, E. J. Odell, J. Comyns Carr, and many others—and many were the jokes cracked within its hospitable walls, where the supper snacks—grilled bones, Welsh rarebits, etc., etc.—were of the very best; and the cellar, too, was excellent ! The seats were in boxes like old-fashioned church pews, nor could it be said you quite had your own way there. The head waiter (one Pauncefort) had an amusing habit of saying : " What you want, sir, is so-and-so," and you rather resigned yourself to the idea that he knew best—sometimes, perhaps, he did. Several clubs also existed where actors congregated which have all passed away. " The Temple " in Norfolk Street, Strand ; " The Unity " in Holywell Street, Strand—long since demolished by the Strand improvements—and especially " The Junior Garrick " in Adelphi Terrace. This last was owned and managed by a Mr. T. Mowbray, and was, for years,







SALVINI

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very popular with the profession. Here many notable gatherings took place from time to time. It was here the luncheon was given to Salvini on his first visit to England. He did not speak a word of English and used to travel round with an interpreter named Paravacini, who was a sort of international agent. At the luncheon in question Salvini's magnificent rolling voice and his beautiful Italian diction when interpreted, sentence by sentence, in a cracked, squeaky falsetto, produced a ludicrous effect which may be imagined better than described without an imitation. The Junior Garrick was much affected by the great John Oxenford, the dramatic critic of *The Times*. I say "great" because Oxenford had undoubtedly one of the most tremendous intellects I have ever been brought in contact with. He had read almost everything, and it was said of him that he never forgot even a date he had read. He knew the Drama in nine different European languages. Something like a critic, indeed! and a worthy successor to the great Hazlitt, whose works are so well known. A great broad mind he had, and though a Bohemian almost to the extent of being Rabelaisian, he was a generous, kindly man, of fine strong instincts of friendship and good nature. On the occasion of our presenting him with his portrait, in oils, to be hung in the Club, he was much affected, and in the course of his speech of thanks he said "he did not recall a time when he had written a line which could send an actor home to find his wife in tears." This was nearly true, but not quite. I remember two instances when he overstepped that line a little. Of a very mediocre actor at the Haymarket (Mr. W. G.), he wrote: "We learn from a contemporary that this

gentleman is considered a very promising actor. For our own part we don't care how much he promises so long as he doesn't *perform*." Of another very conceited performer from the provinces, who appeared at Drury Lane, and whose self-sufficiency got on his nerves, he wrote: "As for Mr. L., who played the part of the hero, he is so very much favoured by *nature* that he scorns to be indebted to *art*." The Junior Garrick went the way of most of the so-called professional clubs. A non-professional element got in and steadily increased in numbers till it gained the ascendancy. Of course, it spent more money than the actors, and the proprietor was, doubtless, justified in recognising on "which side his bread was buttered." At length the two parties became impossible, and at a general meeting in the later part of 1876 a vote went against the professionals, which sounded the death knell of the institution as an actors' club. That very night, in David James and Tom Thorne's dressing-room at the Vaudeville, we resolved to start a new club for ourselves, and the foundation was laid, there and then, of the present successful Green Room Club. The scheme, once started, developed rapidly. We drew up a set of rules which should prevent a repetition of what had so often occurred in clubs of this sort, and which should leave the control always in the hands of the professional members. Every one took the matter up very enthusiastically, and, although the scrutiny and qualification for membership were much stricter in those days than they are now, we opened the club in premises in Adelphi Terrace, Strand, in July 1877. The inaugural luncheon took place at the Criterion Restaurant under the chairmanship of the first president—that grand old

patrician nobleman and sportsman, the late Duke of Beaufort. After luncheon, we adjourned to our own premises, where we were joined by those two splendid actors, Samuel Phelps and Ben Webster, as guests, and the club was fairly started on its way. I joined the committee about the second year, and served on it and the house committee, off and on, for many years. The club has had four homes : Adelphi Terrace, two in Bedford Street, Strand, and its present handsome premises in Leicester Square. Of course, it went through its dark days, when it seemed certain that we should have to close up—indeed, at one time the trustees had decided that we must do so—but the secretary (George Derlacher) and some of the committee and the house committee, which consisted then of Charles Dickens, Jr., R. C. Carton, the successful dramatist, and myself, asked them to give us six more months in which to try “to pull it through,” during which time we had the gratification of seeing it weather the storm and float serenely into the harbour of prosperity. After serving it for a long term of years, I began to find I was so much away from London that I was glad to resign the work into younger hands, but I continued a member down to two years ago (thirty-four years in all), and it was a very great wrench to me to give up my membership and separate myself from many well-loved friends for a reason which one would have thought impossible.

Although never a member of the Savage Club, I was often a welcomed visitor, and many of its members were great friends, notably Henry S. Leigh, the poet and humorist; Mr. Tegetmeier, the naturalist, etc., and especially James Albery, the dramatist (from my first

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days on the stage). I wonder if many people have read the brilliantly human epitaph he wrote for himself, so painfully descriptive—

“ He walked beneath the moon,  
He slept beneath the sun,  
He lived a life of ‘going-to-do,’  
And died with nothing done.”

## X

THROUGH the years I have dealt with I used to run over to Paris and study the French acting whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself. I have seen Got, Regnier, Worms, Febvre, Delaunay, Mounet-Sully, Coquelin, aîné Desclée, Croizette, Bernhardt, Chaumont, Judic, Farquell, Jane Hading, and many others in some of their most famous parts. I saw a splendid performance of Sardou's great drama, *La Patrie*, at the Ambigu, which so fascinated me that I went back to it four times in one week. I saw both Got and Regnier play *La Joie Fait Peur*, and honestly preferred Boucicault in his own version of the same play, entitled *Kerry, or, Night and Morning* (a beautiful piece of acting). I saw a great performance of *L'Etrangère* with Croizette, Bernhardt (in a part almost comedy), Coquelin, and Febvre in the cast. Dejazet I saw play in *La Petite Marquise* in London. I shall always think that Febvre was one of the most satisfying artists of my time on the Parisian stage; and I have no hesitation in saying that Sarah Bernhardt is incomparably the greatest tragedienne and vividly emotional actress I have seen since Ristori.

One notable man whom I saw pretty frequently about this time was Henry Labouchere. Of course I met Mrs. Labouchere as manageress of the old Queen's and the Royalty by turns. Her professional name was Henri-

etta Hodson, and I am inclined to think she was a very much better actress than she got credit for being. In some parts she was charming. Her husband was an extraordinary man. Beneath a veneer of cynicism he carried a good heart, and was a very sincere friend, as he could be a most implacable enemy, whilst his absolute delight in probing and exposing fraud and humbug, either public or individual, amounted to a positive craze. At the time I speak of I was living each summer at Teddington, and he had his beautiful home on the Thames just below, "Pope's Villa" at Twickenham, and I used to travel to and from London with him very frequently. The marvellous stories he would tell about himself! I used to think he must pass a large portion of his time inventing them. He once said to me: "My dear fellow, I have made it impossible for any one to vilify me. I have told such dreadful things against myself that no one can think of anything worse." And truly some of his adventures as he recounted them were rather staggering. Many of them referred to his uncle, Lord Taunton, with whom his relations would appear to have been most strained. He thoroughly enjoyed a joke or good point made against himself, and one incident about that time caused him immense amusement. The old City Barge of the London Corporation, the *Maria Wood*, developed a habit of bringing picnic parties up the river and mooring immediately opposite to "Pope's Villa" for hours in the afternoon, and with a band playing and dancing, etc., the proceedings became what Labouchere thought a very decided nuisance. He wrote to the authorities, and received a reply that "it would be better for him to keep quiet or they would

land and dance on his lawn." Perfectly furious, he then applied to the Thames Conservancy for an explanation, and it turned out that an old and long-disused ferry and right-of-way had once existed exactly on the site of his garden, and the English law of right-of-way is, as is well known, most difficult and expensive to fight or contravene. He positively roared with laughter when all the facts were known.

Another good fellow who enjoyed an "up-river" life and spent two or three summers at Teddington, was John Clayton, the actor before mentioned ("Jack Clayton" his friends called him). What a good chap he was! And how hard he tried, by an assumption of blasé indifference, to disguise the fact. He was a capital actor. His Joseph Surface was fine, and his realisation of the hero in the beautiful version of *A Tale of Two Cities* (of Dickens) made by that brilliant literary dramatist, Herman Merivale, and called *All For Her*, was worthy of the enthusiasm it evoked. Later in life, when his figure lent itself less to heroic parts, he became a splendid character actor. His performances in some of Sir Arthur W. Pinero's early and perfect farces were singularly effective. One whose loyal friendships stood firm in sunshine and sorrow, he was very greatly missed by a large circle of friends when he was taken from them, and they have seen his two sons Dion and Donald Calthrop take a sure footing in the world of art and letters with an immense amount of gratification. John's real name was J. Alfred Calthrop, and he was a brother of the distinguished painter, Claude Calthrop. One story of him has so passed into a proverb that I fear it must be a chestnut to everybody,



but, in case it may meet the eye of any one who has not heard it, I venture to reproduce it here with fitting apology. A budding dramatist (brother of a very successful one) sent him a play to read. After a very short time the author wrote to know if it had been considered. No reply. Quite soon again he wrote a very curt letter demanding an answer. Next day he got his MS. back with the following note enclosed—

“MY DEAR SIR,

“I have read your play. Oh ! my dear sir !—

“Yours truly,

“J. C.”

In January, 1877, I entered on an engagement with John Hollingshead at the old Gaiety, which lasted quite a long time. The theatre was owned by Mr. Lionel Lawson, one of the family who made *The Daily Telegraph* what it is to-day, and uncle of the present Lord Burnham. It was managed entirely by Hollingshead, who, with his faithful henchman, Arthur Talbot Smith, and his stage manager, Robert Soutar, carried it on with huge spirit and enterprise. He was a model actors' manager. So long as the work was done, everything moved easily and happily. An engagement for the Gaiety meant six performances a week, and every extra performance was paid for at the rate of one-sixth. As Hollingshead practically controlled the later London appearances of Charles Mathews, Phelps, and others, and nearly always had at least one other London theatre under his control, as well as odd companies playing in different places, it was essentially a workman's engagement for which my

stock company experiences fitted me. Of course, the work was hard, but I have received as many as thirteen nights' salary in six days by playing every afternoon and evening, and at two different theatres on the Saturday night. At the time I joined him he was running the Opera Comique (also demolished by the Strand improvements) as well as the Gaiety. The usual bill at the Gaiety was a short comedietta, a three-act comedy, and a burlesque; and sometimes the same sort of entertainment was going on at the Opera Comique. I remained in the same engagement for eighteen months, with a short summer holiday. I played the leading juvenile parts in *The Prompter's Box*, *Partners for Life*, *Weak Woman*, *An Evasive Reply*, *The Grasshopper*, *Old Soldiers*, *War to the Knife*, and played with Charles Mathews in *The Critic*, *My Awful Dad*, *The Liar*, *Game of Speculation*, *Used Up*, and *Married for Money*. These gave me little trouble, as I had played most of them with him before, but it was delightful to meet him again, and I think he liked it, as I was familiar with all his business and saved him a lot of trouble and work at rehearsal.

The Saturday *matinées* for many months were given over to Mr. Phelps. With him I played in *The Man of the World*, *Richelieu*, *John Bull*, *First Part of Henry IV.*, *Henry VIII.*, etc., also without much trouble to me, and to his satisfaction; indeed, he used to get Hollingshead to let me go with him for any engagements he played at that time. The Wednesday *matinées* consisted of the most varying programmes. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played *Black-Ey'd Susan* and *The Lady of Lyons*, and I have never seen such a Pauline in my life as Mrs.

Kendal. How she wrung the hearts of the audience ! and what a bounder she made me feel as Beauséant (never a good part). J. F. Young, a member of the company, a dear old modest, great artist, played a *matinée* of *The Old Corporal*, a play adapted from the French—a beautiful performance. He was dumb for two acts. I played the son, and was really almost hysterical at his magnificent pathos. We revived for *matinées* *The Serious Family* and *Paul Pry*. Arthur Sketchley (the original of “Mrs. Brown” papers in *Punch*) played Falstaff for a *matinée*. He was a very good picture of the part in face and figure, but it was only a mediocre performance. I played Prince Hal, as I did also with a gentleman named Murray, a retired East India merchant (a relative of a former Edinburgh manager), who was fired with the same “vaulting ambition,” but, alas, it fell heavily on the stage side of the footlights. No really fat man can play Falstaff ! The physical strain in sustaining the unction of voice and manner is as exhausting as the passion of Othello. At least, so said the very best Falstaff I ever saw—Phelps, again. We also revived Goldsmith’s *Good-Natured Man* for a *matinée*, but it did not act well. Mme. Rhea, a continental actress, made her first appearance in English under the tutorage of John Ryder, playing Beatrice in *Much Ado*. She was a fine woman and a capable actress, who afterwards became a successful star in the United States. Selina Dolaro, a sweet little opera-bouffe singer and actress, decided to “have a shot” at comedy, and played Lady Teazle for a *matinée*. I was the Joseph Surface of a strong cast.

She succeeded fairly well. Poor little "Dolly," as she was called ! Some years after, in New York, I got a letter asking me to call to see her, and I found her in the last stage of consumption, her pretty face drawn and sallow, and her prettier figure wasted to a shadow, but still the same "chirpy" pleasant little body who had been so popular with every one in her healthier and happier days. She only lingered a few weeks after I saw her before "taking her last call."

Some very notable big benefits took place about this time. John Parry, who had been many years with the German Reeds, took his farewell at the Gaiety, and all who could assisted. He was the first of the school of piano entertainers, which has been perpetuated by Corney Grain, George Grossmith, Barclay Gammon, and others. It was said of him that he could "make a piano do anything but talk," and he was a fine humorist to boot. The great Compton benefit took place at Drury Lane and, with its supplementary one in Manchester, netted an enormous sum (if my memory serves me correctly, between £7,000 and £8,000). Mr. Compton was an immense and deserved favourite with both the profession and the public, and it was a monster programme in which every one did anything one could. I remember I "walked on" in a farce with Joseph Jefferson. Creswick had a good farewell benefit at the Gaiety before leaving for Australia, playing *Macbeth*.

A complimentary benefit was given at the Gaiety to Ada Cavendish. *Much Ado* was played with a strong cast, including Henry Neville, W. H. Stephens,

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G. W. Anson, Ada Cavendish, Marion Terry, the writer, etc.

But one of the most notable of these entertainments was got up by Hollingshead for the benefit of the Royal General Theatrical Fund, when we played *John Bull*, with a cast including Phelps, Toole, Lionel Brough, Herman Vezin, Kendal, myself, Miss Carlisle, Mrs. Leigh, Miss West, and, as an after-piece, Charles Mathews played his great farce *Cool as a Cucumber*. Another benefit for the same good object which Hollingshead promoted was a burlesque pantomime, played by all the distinguished amateurs of London. In this, W. S. Gilbert played Harlequin, and got through it very well indeed, but, oh! he looked dreadfully cross and uncomfortable.

Toole was the principal comedian at the Gaiety when I went there, but after the first season he started his own theatre in King William Street (now merged in the Charing Cross Hospital), and Edward Terry took his place. Toole was a good kind fellow, with a host of friends—indeed, popular with everybody—and a capital actor, funny in comedy, with quite a power of domestic pathos, a screamingly funny farce actor, and “a tower of strength” with Nelly Farren in the burlesques. His Paul Pry was excellent, as was his Billy Lackaday, and he made lots of money, for years, with two comedy-dramas written specially for him by Byron, *Dearer Than Life*, and *Uncle Dick’s Darling*, whilst his performances in farces such as *The Steeplechase* and *Ici on Parle Français* were splendid. His Caleb Plummer was good, but not comparable with Jefferson’s. In private he was

a kind-hearted man, full of fun, very fond of practical jokes, and the perpetrator of many amusing ones. When he and Sothern got together they were incorrigible. He had the sympathy of a wide circle of friends in his hours of great domestic affliction, when he lost successively son, daughter, and wife. After some years of management he gave up his theatre for the reason of ill-health, and retired to Brighton, where he lived in gradually failing vitality for many years, greatly cheered by the loving regard of his old and loyal friend, Henry Irving, and always delighted when any other of his pals were down there and would spend a few hours with him in talking over old times, old memories, and old jokes. During my time at the Gaiety, Miss Marie Litton, with her husband, Wybrow Robertson, started a series of *matinées*, on the odd days, at the Imperial, at the western end of the Westminster Aquarium, on the site of which is built the great Central Wesleyan establishment. Phelps played *John Bull*, *The Man of the World*, and finally, *The School for Scandal*. Miss Litton made an excellent Lady Teazle; that very fine actress, Mrs. Stirling, was an admirable Mrs. Candour, of course; Phelps asked Robertson to let me play Charles Surface on the strength of my success in the part in Manchester, but William Farren—for years the Charles of the grand old Haymarket company—had expressed a wish to play with Phelps before he retired, and had been engaged to do so. Then my old friend “switched-off” and suggested me for Joseph. This was settled, and I had the immense satisfaction of gaining the favour of the public and the Press of London from *The Times* down !

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So I had succeeded with him as the two brothers, with their very different characteristics, and found not a little of my pleasure in the fact that I had justified his interest and recommendation and received his very hearty congratulations. William Farren's Charles was, as it was bound to be, most legitimate and fine.

## XI

IN April, 1878, Hollingshead released me for a month to play with Mrs. Rousby at the old Queen's in a play adapted from the German by Daniel E. Bandmann, the tragedian, entitled *Madeleine Morell*. It was not very successful, and was the occasion of a painfully unpleasant lawsuit between Mrs. Rousby and the author, in which I had to appear as a witness, much to my annoyance. It was decided in the lady's favour, but did not do either party much good or credit. Bandmann's leading counsel was Serjeant Parry, a famous barrister of the day, father of the present popular Judge Parry, of County Court fame, who is a prolific and charming writer of both books and plays.

One *matinée* I assisted at was of that very fine play *Love's Sacrifice* with a great cast. It was to introduce a pupil of John Maclean's, another Gaiety actor—Miss Agnes Leonard—and as well as herself and Maclean, Fernandez, Ryder, John Billington, Harry Paulton, myself, Miss Ellen Meyrick, and Miss Cicely Nott took part. What a magnificent play it is, and, well acted, how it "opened the eyes" of many modern-day playgoers on that particular afternoon!

When I left the Gaiety, what John Hollingshead facetiously described as "the sacred lamp of burlesque" was burning brightly. Edward Terry, a great comedy



and burlesque actor; E. Royce, a good second and perhaps the finest character dancer ever seen; Nelly Farren (the idol of the London "boys"), an inimitably dashing burlesque boy, and Kate Vaughan, daintiest of dancers, with infinite charm, made up a quartet which drew all London for months at a stretch. Connie Gilchrist, the present Countess of Orkney, was also "in the team" at that time. Kate Vaughan was not really a great dancer in the strict sense of the term, but her unique grace and her innumerable pretty varieties of the valse gave her a hold over the spectators that many great dancers might have envied. The expression "sacred lamp" reminds me of a fact, not generally known, as showing John Hollingshead's many-sided enterprise. I wonder how many people remember that the very first electric light ever shown in public in London was put up by him in the Strand, outside the old Gaiety?

In the autumn of 1878 I was engaged for the first provincial tour of *Diplomacy*, immediately after its long and successful run in London. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, who were in the original London cast, had secured the rights for the eight largest provincial towns, and our proprietors had them for all the others, opening at Portsmouth on July 29. We had quite a strong company, with J. D. Beveridge as Henri Beauclere and E. D. Ward as Count Orloff; I played Julian Beauclere. Ward had a most beautiful stage voice. C. Langford was Baron Stein; Walter Everard, Algie Fairfax; Miss Carlyle, Dora; and Miss Bella Murdoch, Countess Zicka. Miss Murdoch was the daughter of an old and respected actor, Mr. Mortimer Murdoch, and was the first Mrs.

George S. Titheradge. Other members of the company were Mrs. William Sidney, Miss Sophie Eyre, Miss Armstrong, Mr. Jordan, etc. We were carefully rehearsed by Mr. Bancroft (as he then was) with the infinity of detail for which he was noted, and I really think we played the piece very well. Indeed, more than one provincial playgoer compared us favourably with the other company. What a fine play it is! How splendidly constructed and of what absorbing interest! It has been more than once revived in London since its first run, and, as I write, its present revival is nearing a full year of performances. How much better for all concerned, especially the actors, than the filthy, sordid, morbid garbage drama which is nowadays advocated by a certain section of the Press, and which not only empties all the theatres where it is played, but is slowly and surely killing the "theatre habit" amongst the public, by whose favour and patronage alone the actor can live.

On November 16, 1878, I heard with the deepest sorrow of the death of Mr. Phelps. I was in Southport at the time, and, oddly enough, I had resigned my engagement that particular week. Of course, I came up to London for his funeral and terminated my contract finally at the end of the week.

November 30, 1878, I opened at the Princess's Theatre in a play called *No. 20 of the Bastille of Calvados*, by Joseph Hatton and James Alberty. Charles Warner and I played the two opposing leading parts. It was a pronounced and hopeless failure, only running a few weeks.

The next few months were not very eventful in my work. I played some odd engagements, including the

creation of a leading part in a play written by, and under the management of, Frank Harvey at the old Olympic Theatre, entitled *The Mother*. Frank Harvey was the husband of Mlle. Beatrice, whose company had a great reputation in the provinces of Great Britain. When she died Harvey carried on the company for years. Besides being an excellent actor, he wrote and adapted from the French many good-acting and successful plays.

The Lyceum, after the death of H. L. Bateman, had been taken over by Henry Irving and carried on under his sole management. For a short summer season in 1879 he let it to Miss Genevieve Ward, who engaged me, and we opened with a play called *Zillah*, by Palgrave Simpson and Claude Templar. She essayed a dual rôle of a princess and a gipsy. The play was another bad failure, but the first night was one of the most remarkable I can ever remember. Very amusing to look back on, but extremely unpleasant to have been associated with. It was one of those painful occasions when the audience (as they did sometimes in those days) chose to "guy" and to reply to the lines spoken on the stage. The number of lines they found to reply to, and the wonderful replies they made! One of the characters said, "Ah! I see it all." Voice from the pit: "Do you, by gad! we don't." Some papers had been lowered into a well in a bucket. A character said: "If I could only find those papers!" A gallery wit responded: "Look in the bucket, you old fool, and get it over." But the honours of the evening were reserved for Mr. Tom Mead, a very fine old actor, with a splendid voice, loud and sonorous. Mr. Mead had, in his later life, developed an unfortunate habit of thinking aloud, and as "aloud"

meant (with him) stentorian tones, it could, and sometimes did, become very funny. In *Zillah* he had never been quite easy in his words at rehearsal, and in the nervousness of the first night he forgot his first line, and came down to the footlights, saying : “ Well, here I am,” which had no particular reference to the scene in progress, and got a very sound laugh. Later on he forgot the hero’s name, which was Paul de Roseville, and dwelling on the Christian name, like the tolling of “ Big Ben,” he said, hesitatingly : “ Paul—Paul—Paul——” A wit in front said : “ Paul—Paul, why persecutest thou me ? ” Of course, a yell of laughter followed. Again he tried the same name and got it, but with an unfortunate addition, “ Paul de Roseville,” (and in the same tone :) “ Moustache is coming off, by gad.” Another yell. Then he had a difficulty about the locale of the play, and said, all in one tone : “ Never shall it be said that in this our good city of Toulouse !—no ! Toulon !—no ! ’tis *Toulouse*.” Imagine what this meant to an audience already grown uproarious. And so the play dragged on to the end—a heartbreaking night and a dismal “ frost.” And yet that very night was perhaps the making of Miss Ward’s fortune. Through the failure of *Zillah* she got that fine play *Forget-Me-Not*, by Herman Merivale and Grove, which was an immediate success. She could only play it, however, at the Lyceum a few weeks, as Irving’s autumn season was due. When a suitable theatre was obtained for its new home it ran for many months in London, and went over all the world, making her, I presume and hope, a good, big fortune.

Pending the production of *Forget-Me-Not* we played a revival of *Lucrezia Borgia* for two or three weeks, in

which I played the fine part of the Duke. I did not play in *Forget-Me-Not*; but it may interest Miss Ward, at this distance of time, to know that maybe I was indirectly instrumental in its coming to her. As thus: I had read the play when I was with Miss Neilson in 1874; she was then considering its production, as it had been written with a view to her playing it. In 1879 I was living for the summer in the King's Road, Kingston, about four doors from Merivale, and the day after *Zillah* failed so hopelessly, remembering the play, I went to him and suggested his submitting it to Miss Ward. I don't know whether my suggestion had anything to do with it, but it is certain she produced the play almost immediately, with the gratifying result known. A few lines were altered here and there to make it fit her personality, which was considerably different from Miss Neilson's.

Recurring for a moment to the "gentle art of guying" from the front of the house, what a cowardly proceeding it is! Much the same as beating a tied-up dog. The artist is quite powerless, as the dog is. And yet some very funny things are said. There was the historic occasion when an actor (George W.), in a play that was failing, had the fateful line, "Oh! this is dreadful," and the wag in the pit said, "George, it's perfectly awful." But I once heard a remark from the gallery that was quite irresistible. Before the present Earl of Kilmorey succeeded to the title and was Lord Newry he was considerably interested in theatrical speculations. I think he was the landlord of both the Globe and St. James's Theatres. He may be still of the latter. He also adapted and wrote one or two

plays. A play by him called *Écarté* was produced at the old Globe. He was not altogether lucky in his cast. One of the principal characters was (from one cause or another) sadly out of drawing, and the play was performed to a sort of running commentary of "chaff". But just about half-way through the last act, at about eleven o'clock in the evening, a sort of heavy father of the story sat down in an easy-chair with his daughter on a footstool at his knee and began what bade fair to be a good stereotyped explanatory speech. As far as I remember it began something like this: "'Tis many years ago, my child, your mother died," when a fellow-countryman of Lord Newry's in the gallery observed in the sweetest brogue imaginable: "Och! now thin for the plot!" Of course, the whole house exploded with laughter, and who could help it?

As will be gathered, the last nine months dealt with was not a very fruitful time for me professionally, but my luck was soon to re-assert itself. Henry Irving had engaged me for the autumn before the commencement of Miss Ward's season, and I began my work with him in September 1879, as Fitzharding in *The Iron Chest* and the light comedy part in the old farce of *The Boarding School*. *The Iron Chest* is a play by George Colman the younger, taken from Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. It had been a great favourite with Edmund Kean, and he used to play it frequently, but though it was beautifully produced at the Lyceum, with all the original music (by Storace), including the chorus so popular with our grandparents—

"Holy friars tippled here  
Ere these abbey walls had crumbled,"

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and everything possible done for it, it was voted old-fashioned and turgid (as it was), and it only ran a few weeks. Fitzharding was a part quite out of my line at the time—a sort of old buck of the Georgian period, and I was surprised at being cast for it, especially as a dear old friend, Clifford Cooper, was a member of the company at the time, and it was just in his way. However, I managed to pull through, and my old friend was most genially pleasant about it. On the withdrawal of *The Iron Chest* we played *Hamlet* for a few nights, and I had another shock in being cast for the part of Osric. Then came the great revival of *The Merchant of Venice* with Irving's first appearance as Shylock on November 1, 1879, and Miss Ellen Terry as Portia. Henry Forrester, a good actor and elocutionist, played Antonio; Frank R. Cooper, Gratiano; I played Bassanio. Salanio and Salarino were played by A. Elwood and A. W. Pinero. Others in the cast were Clifford Cooper and Sam Johnson as the Gobbos. Florence Terry was Nerissa, etc. Our most distinguished dramatist (now Sir Arthur W. Pinero) was then only feeling his way to the great position he has since taken, and, during that season, produced a charming one-act comedietta, entitled *Daisy's Escape*, at the Lyceum, in which he played a very admirable character study of a sort of cockney cad.

## XII

IN approaching the subject of Irving's Shylock and his acting generally, I feel that I am entering on dangerous ground. Henry Irving occupied so prominent a position in the public eye for so long a time and there was such an element of magnetic glamour about his whole career that, at first, it may appear presumptuous in me to attempt to say anything about a man of whom so much has been written by many of the greatest minds of his time. But most of his biographers and commentators have been people outside his own calling, and therefore a few words from one on the inside may not seem so much out of place after all, when we are far enough off to view the facts dispassionately.

"We needs must love the highest when we see it,  
Not Lancelot nor another."

And there is no kind of doubt that Irving was a great actor, a very great actor, indeed. But the same great Shakespeare of England is open to us all, and I should be a poor thing and unworthy of having these pages read if I had not the courage of my opinion to the extent of noting, here and there, points which appear to me worthy of consideration. Then, again, it is not always opinion only which is involved. When a man has played alongside a number of foremost artists, male and female, and has had



the opportunity of observing their great thoughts and great effects, it is oftentimes as much a matter of *memory*. As well as what you think a part or scene *ought to be*, there is what you have *seen it be*, and he would be false to his art and the memory of Shakespeare to say that something which he did not think as good was better than his experiences had shown him. Having said so much, I have no hesitation whatever in declaring that Irving was the best actor I ever saw, or ever expect to see, in a great number of parts. In *The Bells*, *Louis XI.*, and *The Lyons Mail* he was incomparable ! His Charles I. was a most beautiful performance. Much of his Hamlet was very fine indeed. In parts of the more physical nature he may not have been quite so satisfying. His King Lear, Othello, Macbeth, Coriolanus were open to criticism. Most certainly his Malvolio, Richelieu, and Wolsey were not equal to Phelps's. In many comedy character parts, such as Digby Grant (*Two Roses*), Chevenix (*Uncle Dick's Darling*), Jingle (*Pickwick*) he was quite splendid. In Romeo and Claude Melnotte he was not at his best. I have always held a theory that in playing or reading the poetry and the poetic drama of any country, whether English, French, Spanish, or Italian, etc., it is an absolute essential that the language shall be spoken in its positive purity, so that (to apply a test) a foreigner sitting in the front of a theatre armed with a lexicon of the language being spoken should be able to refer thereto for the meaning of any word falling on his ear with which he is unacquainted. Now some of the mannerisms of speech which grew on Irving year by year would certainly not have stood this test. I say "grew on," because that is the *bona fide* fact. When

I was a playgoer, before entering the actor's calling, I saw practically all his performances, and, in those days, certainly he had none of these mannerisms, absolutely none. They first appeared, as far as I can recollect, in his masterly performance of Digby Grant. They fitted that character to admiration, and little by little crept into all his work. It used to be said that the audience always wanted a low comedian to be himself, and perpetually reveal the same personality. I doubt if it was true, but I am quite sure it would be inadvisable for an actor playing a wide range of the great heroic parts. There were moments undoubtedly when Irving's mannerisms and readings of some of Shakespeare's immortal lines left something to be desired either in considering their own intrinsic beauty or as an object-lesson to the intelligent foreigner already mentioned. Of Irving the man it would need an abler pen than mine to speak. He was a fine fellow, a loyal friend, a brilliant host, generous to all and to a fault, a great tactician and diplomatist (a man who would have succeeded in any walk of life that he had chosen to take up), with tremendous magnetism and charm. In our calling a great stage manager. One hears a good deal of the schools formed by different great actors, and one often reads of the Irving School. Now, this, I think, is rather misleading. Undoubtedly his eye for stage effect was unique, but the imparting of ideas to young people was not by any means his strong point. His instructions were often halting, vague, and lacking in directness, which made it difficult for the tyro to gather what was expected or required of him.

Of Miss Terry it is equally difficult to write (or even more so, during her lifetime).

Miss Terry was, beyond all question, a most charming actress, and when a part came within the radius of her charm she was quite irresistible. As Lilian Vavasour (*New Men and Old Acres*), Olivia (*The Amber Heart*), Beatrice, Portia, Viola, etc., she was superb. But I venture to think that her limitations were well defined, and that some of the stronger parts of the Shakespearean drama were well outside them. Her "thick and thin" admirers and a considerable portion of the Press appeared to allow their "reason to be taken prisoner" and to praise all her performances alike without analysis, which is a pity, when dealing with great artistic ideals, because of its baneful influence with the student and the aspirant who are always too ready to follow the lead of artists of prominence.

"Harking back" to *The Merchant of Venice* at the Lyceum, it is a matter of history that it was a wonderful success and ran well on to 300 performances consecutively. Irving's Shylock was full of interest and was a really fine study indeed, and Miss Terry's Portia was bewitching and artistic in all the scenes at Belmont. Her trial scene was, perhaps, less convincing. The whole performance of this same trial scene, I submit, merits some special consideration.

An article I wrote for *The Stage* (June 8, 1899) on the subject of stage traditions contained the following note—

"Shylock : I have read and re-read most of what has been written about the 'Jew that Skakespeare drew,' and the authorities who declare it was the author's intention to rehabilitate or beget a sympathy for the Jewish race, then suffering under gross tyrannies and

cruelties : and I willingly admit that, up to a certain point in the play, Shylock is a most ill-used man, and fully deserving of all the sympathy of the audience ; but the modern-day rendering of Shylock as sympathetic in the trial scene I cannot bring myself to believe in. If ever a cold-blooded murderer was drawn, in all his hateful intensity, this is the example. If Shakespeare intended Shylock to win sympathy here, how easy to have made him prove his rights, beyond all dispute, and then forgive the Christian who had so foully wronged him. Here would have been sympathy indeed. Here would have been a monument of a wronged Jew's magnanimity. But no ! He proceeds to the extremest limit the law allows him ; proceeds to what cannot fail to be a cruel murder with the coolness of a butcher killing sheep. Again, I apply the test of the author's words. Shakespeare laid out the scheme of this act with those superb verbal rejoinders or climaxes of Gratiano's—

“‘O learned judge ! Mark, Jew, a learned judge !’

and

“‘A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew !

Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.’

and

“‘A Daniel still I say ! a second Daniel—

I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.’

All of which he takes, as it were, from the mouth of Shylock ; and I refuse to believe that the author intended Gratiano to be here regarded by the audience as an impudent coxcomb, which is inevitable if Shylock carries the sympathy of this scene. No, the baffled, angry, turbulent, tragic (in other words, the traditional exit

of Edmund Kean and others) is surely nearer to the author's intention and most certainly more effective to the audience."

I have ventured to reproduce this note *in extenso* here for two special reasons : First, because the years between have deepened rather than in any way changed the view expressed ; and, second, because in conversations I had with Irving when on my last tour with him in 1901 I think he was almost disposed to agree with my view ; and here I am going to take a rather bold step and to express my curiosity as to whether or not the Shylock he played and made so famous was absolutely the Shylock he would have played if he had possessed a greater amount of physical power. Of course, the Shylock I have in mind depends on the actor's power to play the great scene with Tubal in the earlier act that begins

"You knew, none so well as you, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight."

It is here he must build up the character with graduated awful intensity, and it is here that Edmund Kean and his disciples used "to lift the audience out of their seats," as they did in the final exit from the trial scene, which I have seen played in a whirlwind of passion. Now, I may be taking a great liberty with the memory of a man for whom I entertain nothing but profound respect, but I have always fancied that at the early rehearsals I saw him "make shots" at the big scheme, and, with his great mentality, recognise that it was out of his reach, and so, by degrees, he came to develop with consummate art a Shylock he could compass. This may be considered an untenable hypothesis on my part, but I don't think it is very "wide of the mark," and it

proves nothing more than his tremendous ability and his power to lead his fellow-men. During the run of the play one or two curious incidents occurred. One Saturday night, quite in the later days, after a *matinée*, Henry Forrester, as Antonio, forgot his lines in his first scene and suffered from complete temporary loss of memory. None of us could prompt him. As he expressed it afterwards, the theatre seemed one blaze of light and he could not recall anything. Irving had to come on at an earlier cue as Shylock and take the scene up and go on; meantime Forrester recovered himself and all was well again.

The 250th performance was a great occasion. Immediately on the fall of the curtain the stage was taken possession of by an army of waiters, etc., and was transformed into a huge marquee, where a large number of London's foremost men of art, letters, and brains of every kind gathered at Irving's invitation to supper. The company were included in the invitation. It was a most noteworthy assemblage and did not pass off without a *bona-fide* thrill. The late Lord Houghton, the poet, had been selected to propose the health of our host. He rose to do so, and it was soon apparent that if he had "primed" himself for the task he had relied on misleading aid. He mentioned in turn all the Shylocks he had ever seen, and, as far as we could gather, the only one in whom he could see no merit, or at all events, the least merit, was the man we were gathered together to honour. It was a moment of most painful tension. We scarcely dared look at each other when Irving rose to respond, bland, genial, courteous, and master of the situation, and with infinite tact, gracefully turned the

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whole matter into a humorous groove: put everybody at his ease at once, and proved (if proof were needed) his ability to grapple with a knotty point as only the skilled diplomatist can. I doubt if he ever gave a greater performance of a thoroughly difficult part and scene.

### XIII

FOR the last few weeks of the run (on May 20, 1880, to be exact) we played *The Merchant of Venice* without the last act—finishing with its trial scene, and, as an after-piece, played a beautiful version of the Danish play poem, *King Rene's Daughter*, by W. G. Wills. There were several versions of this play extant. I had played in two before the one in question, but I think Wills's was by far the best. The delightful legend just suited his style of writing. Irving played the lover (Count Tristan); Frank Cooper, Sir Geoffrey; I, King Rene; Tom Mead, the physician, Eben Jahia; and Miss Ellen Terry, the blind daughter. A marvellously beautiful scene was supplied by Hawes Craven, and with gorgeous costume, etc., and very careful rehearsals, it was voted a great success. A rather ludicrous accident occurred one night, which, in a theatre of less reverence, might easily have wrecked the performance for that occasion. Irving and Frank Cooper were both very shortsighted, and the former dropped a jewelled amulet, used in the play, and tried in vain to find it with his foot. Failing to do so, he whispered to Cooper: "Where is it, Frank? Find it! Find it!" Frank whispered in reply: "I can't, governor; I am more blind than you are." And here was a complete deadlock, when behold! the blind girl (Miss Terry) came on and picked



it up and handed it to "the chief!" It was absolutely the only way out of the difficulty, and happily, the audience did not notice the comic side of the incident, or were too well-behaved to show that they did.

W. G. Wills, the author of this play, was a rather extraordinary man, who merits more than a passing reference from one who knew him. An Irishman, with a pronounced though rather delightful brogue, he occupied a pleasant studio in Chelsea, where he lived and worked with his secretary, Alfred C. Calmour, who afterwards wrote *The Amber Heart* for Miss Terry, and other plays. A Bohemian of the most pronounced type, with unkempt beard and shabby clothes, and a generally soiled and neglected appearance—steeped to the lips in literature of the best kind—and, apparently, thinking blank verse by day and dreaming it by night, as well as painting pictures, many of them much above the average. What a lot of fine plays he wrote—*Charles I.*, *Eugene Aram*, *Vanderdecken* (*The Flying Dutchman*), for Irving; *Jane Shore* and *Juanna* for Wilson Barrett and Miss Heath; *Medea* for Miss Bateman; *Jane Eyre* for Mrs. Beere, etc., etc. Of these *Charles I.* was, easily, the most popular. It came just when Irving was making his great mark and greatly helped him on the road to fame. What a beautiful performance he gave of the part! His regal dignity, tenderness and pathos were beyond praise. I was present at the first performance of the play in September 1872, and a very unusual thing occurred. When the curtain went up on the first scene, which represented a glade at Hampton Court, so vividly real

was it, and so beautifully painted, that the audience absolutely refused to allow a word to be spoken until that splendid artist, Hawes Craven, had come on and bowed his acknowledgments of their congratulation. I have never seen this occur on any other occasion. In *Charles I.* the treatment of the character of Cromwell raised a tremendous outcry and, truth to say, the great Protector is represented in an unduly truculent and unworthy light—considerably at variance with the impression one gets who reads the history of the times. I never heard Wills's reason for this; or whether he was a rabid Royalist. One might imagine so. But it brought about one result. A Colonel Richards, connected with the staff of one of the big London daily newspapers (*The Morning Advertiser*, if my memory serves me correctly), had written an ambitious play with Cromwell as the central figure. As a sort of protest this play was immediately produced at the old Queen's, with George Rignold as Cromwell (at the Lyceum the character was originally played by George Belmore). I saw this play, too. It was not a good one, but had one magnificent scene (in fact, it was a one-scene play), where Cromwell had a glorious soliloquy over the coffin of the King. However, it failed to live; and Wills's *Charles I.* remained a popular feature of Irving's repertory till his death, and has been played by his son (H. B.) since.

A very interesting story was extant at the time anent the writing of *Charles I.* It ran thus : Wills had got to the end of the third act of the play to the great satisfaction of Bateman and Irving himself, but could not

find a solution for the end of it. One night all three of them had supped at Bateman's house in Kensington. Gore and Bateman had left the table and was lying on the sofa smoking. As Wills and Irving were chatting over their cigars, Bateman (who had appeared to be half asleep) suddenly sprang up, saying: "Wills, by gad! I've got it." Both said "What?" Said Bateman, "The last act of *Charles I.* Wills, have you ever read *Black-Ey'd Susan*?" Of course, Wills had not, probably (dreamer as he was) he had never heard of it. Said Bateman: "Go and get a book at French's and read the parting of William and Susan." Wills did so, and finished *Charles I.* Now, I give this story for what it is worth; but most certainly facts bear it out marvellously, because the two situations are identical, even to the disposal of the trinkets, always allowing for the difference created by Wills's beautiful and poetic English. Both of them are good enough, strong enough, and pathetic enough to bring a good big lump into the throat of any true man or woman wherever they may be played.

When the Lyceum season was nearing its end, it was announced publicly that the autumn production would be *The Corsican Brothers*. As I had been successful as M. Chateau Renaud in the previous revival of that play in London and had pleased the adapter of it, Dion Boucicault, who was not easily satisfied, I naturally hoped that I should again be cast for the same part, and I was therefore correspondingly disappointed when it was stated later that William Terriss had been engaged for it. If any influence was at work against

me, it strangely miscarried, and my luck once more stood me in good stead. My best friend could not have done me a better turn. Terriss had been playing with Messrs. Hare and Kendal at the St. James's, and, knowing that they were contemplating a play by W. G. Wills in the autumn, I walked along to see them, and came out of their office with an engagement settled for the autumn. And this is where my good luck came in.

*The Corsican Brothers* contains very little female interest. The drama is all between the twin brothers and M. Chateau Renaud. If the latter does not loom up a great factor in the play, deadly, feared, there is not much play left. When I saw the production at the Lyceum I became aware that in the discretion of the stage manager the part was terribly "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd" compared to the scope allowed me at the Princess's, and was not (in this production, at least) at all a good one. And the duel was a poor display compared with what we had given. Neither Irving nor Terriss appeared to be the equal of Clayton and myself as swordsmen. So, all things considered, I did not regret being out of it, and it so fell out that I was destined to make one of the most signal marks of my London career in the play we did at the St. James's (after rehearsing in the provinces) on October 9, 1880. This play was called *William and Susan*, and was a new version of Douglas Jerrold's classic *Black-Ey'd Susan*, prepared by W. G. Wills. Kendal played William, Mrs. Kendal Susan, John Hare (as he then was) the Admiral, and I played Captain Crosstree. A perfect

“ storm in a tea-cup ” was raised by the London Press, led by Clement Scott of the *Daily Telegraph*, about the desecration of Douglas Jerrold’s classic. What absurd nonsense it was. As I pointed out to Scott one night at supper, no one had ever seen Douglas Jerrold’s drama in our time. The play we had always played was his in name only. His, with one entire act cut out, and hundreds of lines of “ gag ” written in. Nothing could have been more respectful than Wills’s treatment of the subject. He wrote a beautiful new first act to lead up to Jerrold’s story, and when he reached the latter’s matter he humoured every line, as well as every time-honoured gag. In my humble judgment it was a much better play for the time in which it was played. It had a very considerable success, and ran for several months. John Hare stage-managed it most carefully, and played the Admiral with great delicacy. I have seen better Williams than Kendal, and I have seen him in parts I preferred him in, but he pleased the St. James’s audiences greatly. In all my career I have never seen a more perfect performance of sincere, honest womanliness than Mrs. Kendal’s Susan. She was magnificent. My part of Crosstree consisted principally of one big scene with her; and, while I shall have occasion later in these notes to lay my tribute at the feet of Mrs. Kendal, I cannot pass over this particular performance without thanking her with all the warmth at my command for her assistance and inspiration in making a success which was rather exceptional, and advanced me a good long step in the favour of the London public. Good sketches of character were supplied by that fine actor

Wenman, Brandon Thomas, the author of *Charley's Aunt*, etc., Mackintosh, and Miss Phillips, and nothing was ever better played at the St. James's in this or any other play than the small parts entrusted to Albert Chevalier—now so famous in his own inimitable way—and then, as now, an artist to his finger-tips.

#### XIV

IN the April of 1881 I was playing a series of *matinées* at the Imperial with Miss Helen Barry, and at Drury Lane every evening with John McCullough. During Miss Barry's season we produced *London Assurance*, *Arkwright's Wife*, and *Led Astray*. It was only a moderately successful venture, and was, perhaps, principally notable for the fact that E. S. Willard made his first appearance in London during these performances. He was playing at Brighton at the time, and made the journey to and fro each day. His different impersonations were noteworthy for the care and thought which afterwards brought him to the front and made him so sound a favourite on both sides of the Atlantic. Miss Helen Barry was "a monstrous fine woman," and a kind-hearted creature, who had taken to the stage too late in life to achieve more than passing notice. She died in New York a few years after. John McCullough, the American tragedian, was everybody's favourite. He was not, strictly speaking, a great actor, being, in truth, an imitator of his great model, Edwin Forrest, but he had an extraordinary amount of magnetism and a singularly fine appearance for Roman parts. With a good figure, a magnificent torso, and a picturesque head beautifully poised on his shoulders, he looked the absolute embodiment of the part of Virginius, in which he opened in

England. With all these advantages, supplemented by a good, deep, and resonant voice, he created a most favourable impression. A lady friend of mine who saw the play said : " I wished he was my father," and that was a fair summing up of what many people thought. Our business was quite good. When he changed the bill to *Othello*, his success was not nearly so pronounced. As a man, he was tremendously popular—kindly, genial, full of fun, anecdote, and humour, but an awful " night-owl." He would never go to bed so long as any one would sit up with him. Thus, I fear, he " burnt the candle at both ends," and in 1884 I met him in New York, his fine physique wasted to a shadow and his poor brain showing signs of that dread ailment in which he passed away in 1885, to the inexpressible grief of as many friends as a man ever had. John had been " juvenile man " with Edwin Forrest, and he used to tell some splendid stories of that, undoubtedly, great actor. I recall one of them as I write.

Forrest was playing *Virginius*, with a bad attack of gout in both hands and feet, and in the scene in Act I., when *Virginius* gives *Virginia* to *Icilius* (played by McCullough), he said, in his grand tone and manner, offering his hand—

VIRG. : " Thou seest that hand? It is a Roman's, boy.

. . . . .  
Knew it the lurking-place of treason, though  
It were a brother's heart, 'twould drag the caitiff  
Forth. Darest thou take that hand? "

ICIL. : " I dare, *Virginius*."

VIRG. : " Then take it." (And then in muttered tone :)

" Don't touch, for heaven's sake ! "



John McCullough made a joke one night while in England at the club that "set the table in a roar." 1881 was the year in which an American horse, Iroquois, won the Derby, named of course, after the powerful tribe of North American Indians. On the occasion of which I speak we were all chaffing, and the conversation turned on the contrasted pronunciation of the English language in England and America. I forgot what led up to it, but Johnny Toole remarked: "Why, hang it, you people in America have not got a language." John replied in a flash: "Haven't we, by Jove? What about Iroquois?" He and I became great "pals," and when he was returning to America he made me a pleasant offer to accompany him, but I did not accept for the reason that another old friend, Fred B. Warde, was with him, and I did not see that there would be much opening for two of us in supporting a male "star." In the performance of *Virginius* at Drury Lane, I played Appius Claudius; John Ryder, Dentatus; J. R. Gibson, Numitorius; Gus Harris (the manager of the theatre), Icilius; and Lydia Cowell (Mrs. James Mortimer), Virginia. Mortimer was editor of the *London Figaro*. Gus Harris (I knew all of his family when he was a boy) afterwards became Sheriff of the City of London, and eventually Sir Augustus Harris. As Icilius he wore a toga made of light blue soft silk, and I am afraid that, whatever his great capacities were, his dearest friend could not have said they included the performance of Roman parts. John Ryder, who played Dentatus, was quite a character. "Honest John" he was sometimes called, and not without reason. He was certainly bluff and outspoken to a fault, but as "straight as a gun-barrel," and quite

fearless when he had anything to say. He was an actor of the Macready school, and unwilling to concede that any one could compare with "Mac," as he called him. He was an admirable stage instructor, and was responsible for the success of Adelaide Neilson, Miss Wallis, Margaret Leighton, and many others, as well as a most excellent actor, more especially of strong rugged parts, full of humanity, such as Hubert (*King John*), Williams (*Henry V.*), Dentatus, John Ironbrace (*Used Up*), etc., etc. A number of splendid stories abounded of him in his time, but, unfortunately, he was in the habit of expressing himself so very forcibly that they are not all reproducible in cold print. On the occasion of the first appearance of his pupil, Miss Margaret Leighton, who made a very great success as Julia in *The Hunchback*, amidst an avalanche of flowers and congratulations, at the end of the performance he led her by the hand to the centre of the stage and pointing his dexter finger at the audience said in emphatic tone: "Look here! when I am dead, people may say I couldn't act, but, by Heavens! will anybody say I couldn't teach?" He was most amusing one night in John McCullough's dressing-room. He was then sixty-nine years old and talked of retiring the next year, when he would be seventy. His mother was still alive, aged ninety-one. He told of her complaint that he did not go often enough to see her, and his reply was this: "I said to her, 'Look here, mother, this be hanged (?). I'm acting every night and I give three or four lessons a day, and when Sunday comes I'm deuced (?) glad of the rest. Upon my soul, you look upon me as a blessed (?) kid!' " Isn't that human? Bluff old John Ryder as we knew him was still the "kid" (the baby) to

some one who had nursed and loved him as such. But there was great humanity in all he did. I was told a very pretty story of the marriage of his only daughter (he had been a widower for years). At the wedding breakfast in the snug little home in Brixton, in the course of the function, his health was proposed and he rose to respond. Putting his hand on the shoulder of the bridegroom, he quoted, inimitably, the speech from *Virginius*—

“ Didst thou but know, young man,  
 How fondly I have watched her since the day  
 Her mother died, and left me to a charge  
 Of double duty bound—how she hath been  
 My ponder’d thought by day, my dream by night,  
 My prayer, my vow, my offering, my praise,  
 My sweet companion, pupil, tutor, child !—  
 Thou wouldst not wonder that my drowning eye  
 And choking utterance upbraid the tongue  
 That tells thee she is thine ! . . . ”

This may sound theatrical to some, but my informant, who was present, told me it was most beautifully done, with the utmost feeling, and every one present was greatly affected.

John Ryder was a good specimen of an Englishman, tall, straight, and with a fine physique generally. In face he greatly resembled the Abbé Liszt, except that his features were stronger and without the long hair. Writing of the Abbé Liszt, I once had the pleasure of hearing him play, in private, under very interesting circumstances. During a visit of his to London I was calling one Sunday afternoon on an old and treasured

friend—W. Beatty-Kingston, of the *Daily Telegraph*—and the maestro was among his guests that day. Beatty-Kingston was himself one of the finest amateur pianists in England and his daughter was only a little less proficient. After several duets by father and daughter on two grand pianos Miss Kingston played over a pretty ballad of her own composition. Liszt appeared interested, and asked her to repeat it. She did so, and then the maestro sat down to the piano, and, with his eyes half closed and his mind apparently well over the frontier of dreamland, improvised variations on the melody for at least half an hour. It was most delightful and a never-to-be-forgotten treat.

Every summer about this time a little party of us used to have one delightful holiday in rowing down the Thames from Oxford to Teddington. The trip was organised by Tom Thorne, then co-lessee of the Vaudeville with David James. He, too, saw to the provisions and the canteen, and everything was of the best; each of us paying our share of the actual cost. We had two skiffs, and a boy to attend to our wants and do the necessary work. Our party usually comprised Henry Neville, James Fernandez, Charles Warner, Clement Scott, Tom Thorne, myself, and one or two others. What a glorious time we had, and what over-grown schoolboys we became for the nonce! We started from Oxford on Sunday morning, and even those who had London engagements could fulfil them each night and do every mile of the journey by a careful study of the railway time-tables. Fernandez would make our sides ache with his wonderfully told stories of his earlier days on the stage. Tom Thorne wanted to race every boat that

came alongside ; Charles Warner had splendid spirits, in which quality the writer was not deficient, and Clement Scott his temperamental sentiment which friendship always brought to the surface so readily. We lunched under the willows at Newnham, dined in the hayfield at Clifton Hampton, and pursued our way by easy stages past lovely Mapledurham, the regatta course at Henley and Medmenham Abbey, Dancesfield, and Harleyford, past the grand Quarry Woods at Marlow, and the glorious sylvan beauties of Cliveden, and so on until we usually pulled up about Friday at a friend's lawn at Teddington, where the hospitality of a kind host and hostess (Mr. and Mrs. Beale) awaited us. Oh, youth, friendship, and nature ! what a combination you made, and how glorious it all seemed in those old, bright days ! Alas ! three of those named have " crossed the bar," one has fallen on evil times. Fernandez and I never speak of the joy of those days without something like a glow of the old happy enthusiasm, not, however, without a large admixture of sad and kindly thoughts for those dear old companions who have drifted away out of our sight.

## XV

IN the autumn of 1881 I went to New York under engagement to McKee Rankin. Rankin had come to London in April 1880 with what, I think, was the very best of all the so-called Western dramas, *The Danites*, by Joaquin Miller, "the poet of the Sierras," as he was called. Coming at that season of the year, he was able to collect what is now called an "all star-cast," who were anxious to visit London and willing to accept terms accordingly. Many of the company were leading artists I had met during my visits to America, whose names will be found in these notes, among them W. E. Sheridan, Natt Lingham, Lindsay Harris, and dear, good Ned Holland, who died within two months of my writing these lines. The play was produced at Sadler's Wells theatre, then under the management of Mrs. Bateman, and made such a favourable impression that it was transferred to the Globe, where it ran along merrily for some months. During his time in London, Rankin saw, and was struck with, *William and Susan* at the St. James's, and arranged to produce the play in New York. He engaged me for my original part, and to stage-manage the play on the St. James's lines. One condition of the London production was completely reversed in New York. Rankin was an excellent William, but Mrs. Rankin could not compare with Mrs. Kendal as Susan;

but the fates were dead against us as it proved. All of us of a certain age will remember the thrill of horror that ran through the nation when news came that President Garfield had been shot by a cowardly assassin on that fateful day, July 2, 1881. A good man, worthily risen from a log cabin, brave, honourable, and the chosen ruler of a great people, bound to us by every tie of kinship and interest, had been laid low by the hand of a degenerate who was, as Shakespeare says of Barnardine in *Measure for Measure*, "Unfit to live or die." For two months, in spirit, we watched by the sufferer's bedside with fear and hope alternating in our hearts as the daily bulletins were announced. When he was removed to Elberon, by the sea, on September 6, hope was in the ascendant; on the 15th, hope gave way to despair. Blood-poisoning had set in. On the 19th, he breathed his last, to the grief of the whole civilised world, and on the same 19th we produced in New York City, at the 14th Street Theatre, *William and Susan*. We heard the news as we finished the performance; and the next day the city was draped with black in every corner; the whole nation was beside itself with grief, and business was practically dead for days. In those days every production in America depended greatly on the "send-off," as they call it, and I don't think it is much changed to-day. Nothing could stand up against such a "facer," and *William and Susan* was as "dead as Queen Anne." When the public recovered its wonted spirit we did another new play, by Joaquin Miller, called *49*, a story of the first gold rush to California, which was in that year. It was in a terribly chaotic state when the manuscript reached us, and we had to use all our wits and

experience to get it into acting shape. Some time after, during some legal action anent the play, I believe Rankin testified that the second act was entirely constructed by myself. From recollection I don't think I should have claimed so much as that; but I did a good deal to it and all I could. With *William and Susan* dead, much of my value to Rankin was gone. Obviously I could not be expected to rival a fine actor like W. E. Sheridan in a purely American part that fitted him superbly in *The Danites*, and in a thousand little unpleasant ways I was made to feel it, so that after about eight weeks, having received an offer from Joseph Brooks to join him for a tour of the then popular Drury Lane drama, *The World*, I came to an amicable and equitable arrangement with Rankin in Chicago, and left there with Brooks one Saturday after a *matinée* for New Orleans, where I opened on Monday. With *The World* I continued the whole of the season (a quite pleasant engagement), and with it I made my first trip to the Pacific Coast and sampled "the glorious climate of California." I opened in San Francisco in January 1882. I should like to say here, that, wonderful and interesting as are many of the cities of the Eastern States, in their great development of business facilities and luxuries, the scenes and charms of the United States that "stand out" in the mind of any travelling European do not begin until he gets west of the Mississippi River. Everything in the great far West is so different to anything he has ever seen, and it is all so stupendous, so picturesque, and, in many cases, so wonderful that the mind is in a state of constant expansion and the brain perpetually exercised in "taking it all in." The Humboldt River,



which you meet in the morning on the Union Pacific, is a little ditch, and after travelling beside it all day, you see it develop into a very large body of water, which discharges into Lake Humboldt, hundreds of miles from any coast, and disappears altogether. Where does it go to? The immense alkali plains, with their herds of antelope, etc., and the journey through the snowsheds of the great Rockies and Sierras, until you descend into the Sacramento Valley of the Pacific slope, with its birds of brilliant plumage, but little or no song; its flowers of radiant colourings, but little or no scent, all go to make up an experience unique and full of interest as you meet it for the first time. And once arrived in San Francisco you seem to take on a new existence. The climate, to a newcomer, is like a joyous tonic. I played there a month and enjoyed every minute of it. I saw all there was to be seen—the park and the great seal rocks; had trips through Chinatown, with its opium dens, its cafés, its joss houses, and its theatres, etc. Was made a member of the well-known Bohemian Club, and met a lot of most hospitable friends—Clay Green, Frank Unger, Harry Jocelyn, Eugene Dewey, and a namesake, Col. Barnes, a very prominent lawyer of the city, a man of great intellect and a firm friend. Saw Jennie Lee and her husband, J. P. Burnett, off to Australia, and, wonderful to relate, on the same steamer met John Hollingshead's niece, Maud Hobson, all that distance away from home, quite unexpectedly, after having been at the Gaiety Theatre, London, with her for months. She was on the way to Honolulu with her husband, Captain Hailey, late of the Hussars, who had an appointment there.

Two things struck me forcibly about San Francisco when I first visited it. The first was the extraordinary cosmopolitan character of its population. All the nations were represented, and all seemed to have their own little colony and almost their own districts wherein they lived. A reason for this was probably to be found in the fact that the Pacific Coast had been the end of the earth to a large body of the world's wanderers. To use a term in vogue nowadays, it was a kind of "dumping ground" for many hundreds who had come there by land or sea, and either could not from circumstances get any further, or were disinclined to; and there they had settled and formed new ties and started new lives, but always apparently in their own coteries and among their own compatriots. The other impression was the perfectly admirable character of some of the moderate-priced restaurants. There were four or five of these that I could name where a really excellent meal could be had for 50 cents (about 2s. of English money), and for \$1 (4s.) the menu served was positively luxurious. I am writing of the days before the great earthquake, which may easily have considerably changed many of the conditions.

The trip back from California, playing by the way, was brim full of interest to me, and two or three references will I hope also interest my readers. How the staff managed to get the play *The World* on to the stage in such places as some of the one-night stands I shall never know. They did, and there's the wonder! The first place we stopped at was San José, where I was much amused by a well-intentioned friend, who drove me out some miles to an old mission house, a dilapidated building

looking like an old malt house in England, and, pulling up opposite thereto, said, with great emphasis : “ There, sir, one hundred years old ! ” I did not at first realise what he was driving at, and he repeated it even more emphatically. I wish I could reproduce his looks, though not his language, when I gathered his meaning, and promised him that when I met him in England I would show him places one thousand years old.

Sacramento, Stockton, with its big State asylum, and Reno presented no special features, but from the latter we branched off to Carson City, where one of the United States mints was situated, and Virginia City, famous for the great mining boom of the fifties, where the Comstock lode was discovered running through the mountains, and where the celebrated Californian millionaires, J. Mackay, O’Brien, Fair, and others made their enormous fortunes. The true stories of their operations have scarcely a parallel in the whole history of mining. When I was there the production of the mines had practically “ given out,” and the town was well-nigh deserted. The streets, chiefly of wooden-frame houses, had been taken possession of by the Indians, and I remember a curious feeling coming over me as I walked to the theatre, where the orchestra, after parading the streets, was playing a selection of music on the front verandah, and every doorstep and window sill in sight was occupied by “ noble red men ” and their families as interested listeners, of course, without the means or inclination to go inside. Verily, I felt that I had touched a lower level in my career than I had looked forward to. I went down the Savage mine, which had been one of the most productive, with the manager, whom I had met in San

Francisco, and was shown the little wooden house in which Mrs. John Mackay lived and toiled with her husband in those early days. and I ruminated on the wonderful turns of the wheel of fortune as I contrasted it with the lordly dwelling she occupied, subsequently, in Carlton House Terrace, London. I remember reading in the newspapers of her burning a portrait by Meissonier that failed to please her.

From there back to Reno and on to Ogden, where again we left the main line to call at Salt Lake City, and it was with no small amount of curiosity that I found myself in the centre of Mormonism. It is not my province to say a word about this faith or its followers, but the city as I saw it showed on every hand evidences of the master mind of a born leader of men. Although Joseph Smith was credited with the foundation of this powerful organisation, beyond all question that master mind was Brigham Young. First, the selection of this particular valley for occupation after a pilgrimage of a thousand miles was a stroke of genius, and the indomitable will of the "Prophet" and the perseverance of his disciples had turned its fertility to such account that it was a veritable garden in the desert. Then the utilisation of the adjacent perpetually snow-covered mountains was a wonderful instance of foresight. The city was built on the slope of the foot-hills of these, and when the snow melted in summer the water was caught and stored as it ran down the hillsides in a huge dyke, and by a system of small sluices conducted down the sides of the streets under the shade of countless trees, giving a sense of coolness on the hottest day. It was more than 90 in the shade when I was there. And the

same mind which could harness the forces of nature was able to make the most of the resources of science and art. When Brigham Young wanted to do anything in the public interest, he was content to go to the highest authority on the subject, and follow that authority blindly. He built a new Tabernacle, which was capable of seating an immense concourse of people with one gallery only, and which, through its exit arrangements, could be emptied in a minute and a half. I was shown over this building by a man who to my surprise addressed me as Mr. Barnes at our first meeting. He had been in the orchestra at Drury Lane theatre when I was there ten years before. In this immense building, which, from the outside looked like a long beehive, my guide stood at one end by the organ, and I went to the extreme other end. In the distance he looked positively small. Such were the acoustics that he spoke, whispered, rubbed his coat-sleeve with his hand, and dropped a pin into his hat by turns, and I heard all as distinctly as if I stood at his side. This may sound like an exaggeration, but any one who has been there will know it is a positive fact. And why was it? Because the building was constructed on the rigid principles of acoustics of the greatest authority, Sir Christopher Wren. A domed roof with no beams and a cellared floor. Other public buildings were equally remarkable, but I have said enough to prove the man who planned it all had an intellect quite out of the ordinary. Brigham Young was dead when I was there. His successor, Mr. Taylor, visited the theatre one night with some of his wives, and they seemed interested and quite a happy, though not particularly distinguished, family. Of course, I am writing of the time before the

United States Government passed stringent laws against polygamy and other Mormon customs (indeed the law was passed through the Senate the very week I was there). I have not been in Utah since, and cannot, therefore, speak of any change it may have brought about. I only remember that I left Salt Lake City much impressed with the thrift of the people and the evidences of the strong worldly wisdom and common-sense of the departed Brigham Young.

## XVI

BACK on to the main line at Ogden and by way of Laramie City to Cheyenne, where a minor surprise awaited me. On the way to the theatre for the evening performance notes of a post-horn greeted my ears, and down the main street dashed a perfectly appointed four-in-hand drag, post-boy and all. A party of rich New Yorkers, including Charles Oelrichs (brother of Herman, previously mentioned), who had a large ranch some miles out on the prairies, had driven in to see the play. That night a ludicrous incident occurred which caused them and the writer no little amusement. The sensation scene at the end of the third act of *The World* was three starving creatures on a raft in the open sea signalling to a vessel which comes into sight on the horizon. Instead of waiting to descend at the psychological moment as a properly constructed and trained curtain should, the Cheyenne curtain broke from its moorings and dropped to the stage, bodily, some moments before the end of the act, leaving us with nothing to do but swim (or walk) through the ocean in full view of the audience. It was ludicrous, and there was positively no saving of the situation; so it flashed across my mind that the very best thing to do was to turn it into a thoroughly good laugh and get out of the dilemma that way. I shouted to my fellow-voyagers, "There's nothing

left but to swim for it, boys, and Heaven give us strength to reach the prompt entrance." And we plunged into the seething (?) billows, and walked to the "wings." The audience shouted with laughter, and we had a good joke over it at the club that night at supper; and so all ended happily.

From Cheyenne to Denver; and here, too, I had two little surprises. As is well known the high altitude of Denver makes it particularly beneficial in all cases of lung trouble. The air is so light and curative in its effect! The healthy man finds, at first, a difficulty in breathing if climbing a hill or going up stairs. My first surprise was to meet, quite unexpectedly, Miss Angelina Claude, a charming little singing comedienne, who had been in the old Strand when I was there in 1873, walking with her husband, Richard Kavanagh, of Dublin, one of the best fellows who ever lived. "Dick" (as all his friends called him) had gone out there, practically, to die of consumption, but hoping a stay there might prolong his life a few months, and his good loving little wife sadly expected to see the last of him there. He stayed a little over a year and came back so nearly cured—if not quite—that I believe he lived for twelve or fourteen years afterwards; nor do I remember that the old ailment had anything to do with the dear fellow's end when it came. Strolling with this happy Darby and Joan we turned a corner and there was my second surprise—a good-sized ten-roomed house coming down the middle of the street on rollers, being moved from one part of the city to another, a distance of more than a mile.

Our tour ended in Denver, and I came through to New



York and straight home to London again by the s.s. *Britannic*, then under the command of the popular Captain Perry, sailing on April 1 and arriving April 10. After so much travelling I intended taking a good rest, but it was not to be. Almost immediately on my arrival Mr. J. Comyns Carr hunted me up with an offer to play in his version of Thomas Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd*; so that I "got into harness" at once and opened in that play at the Globe on April 29, 1882. There was very considerable excitement about the production of this play, and something like a fierce controversy raged round its presentation. Pinero had produced some time previously, at the St. James's, a play called *The Squire*. That it was founded on Hardy's book it was quite idle to deny. How it came about it is not my province to discuss. Everybody one met advanced a different explanation at the time. Whatever the true story was, there could be no doubt that *The Squire*, with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal, Wenman, and Mackintosh in a great character study of a country yokel called Gunnion, had "taken the wind out of the sails" of Carr's version of the story. Not that the latter was not a good play! It was, distinctly. I played in *The Squire* afterwards with the Kendals, and I think a just summing up of their respective merits would be that, whereas Pinero's play was the neatest and best piece of dramatic workmanship, Carr's version retained more of the vigour and local colour of the great original. A lot was made of Hardy's bucolics in Carr's play, and those were a set of characters Hardy delighted in and on which he spread himself with evident relish. It is rather an odd small coincidence that I should be writing



*Photo]*

J. H. BARNES AS SERJEANT TROY  
("Far from the Madding Crowd")

*[J. E. Mayall*

*[To face page 134*



of his work a long way from home within forty-eight hours of reading in the newspapers that he has been justly awarded the "Nobel" prize for literature. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* Mrs. Bernard Beere played Bathsheba, Charles Kelly was the Gabriel Oak, and I played Sergeant Troy, and all the smaller parts were well cast. Kelly stage-managed the play. What a popular chap he was, and what an admirable actor! He left a troop of sorrowing friends when he was called away. The play was most favourably noticed by the Press, as were the principal performers, but was not a great success and only ran a few weeks.

It fell out that the July of 1882 was to be a very eventful time in my career. On the third of that month I opened at Drury Lane as Macduff to the Macbeth of my old friend, William Rignold, and the Lady Macbeth of that incomparable artist, Mme. Ristori. I say "incomparable" because not only was she the greatest actress I have ever played with or seen, but she was at the same time by far the greatest female mentality I have ever met. She came to London for four weeks and played Lady Macbeth and Elizabeth, Queen of England, for two weeks each. Her Lady Macbeth, though a very fine performance, of which the sleep-walking scene was a positive revelation, took such extraordinary liberties with the play as Shakespeare wrote it that at certain points it seemed, and was undoubtedly, all wrong; but this was the result of studying the play from a bad translation, as she afterwards admitted in conversation. Her favourite dramatist in Italy, Giacometta, had in her younger days prepared a version of the play for her to "star" in, which obscured

so much of the text that she was quite surprised, and most graciously so, when it was pointed out to her how much she had missed of the great story. *Macbeth* had been my favourite study for six or seven years previously—and, indeed, is yet—and I had read everything I could find on the subject, English and foreign, and I could not understand at first how such an intellect could have so completely tripped. We got to be the very best of friends and, through the interpretation of her manager, Mr. Wertheimer, had many delightful chats on the subject, and it was quite amazing to note her interest in some of the points I was able to bring before her. Of course any attempt to make Lady Macbeth the star part of this play will always end in disaster. Shakespeare called the play *Macbeth*, and if it is considered in its *absolute entirety* nothing can dethrone him from his dominant position in what is perhaps the greatest play in our language, as well as the nearest approach to the model of the great Greek tragedies which the English tongue can show. But there was nothing but admiration for her performance of the part, as she had studied it. And if one writes this of her Lady Macbeth, what must be said of her Elizabeth? In all my life I never saw such acting. It was beyond all praise. The part, as is known to many, opens with the Queen as a young woman in love with Essex (which part I played), and each act finds her and all her court growing older until we meet her in the last act, a withered, dogmatic old hag. It runs the gamut of the emotions and brings into play all the phases of the actor's skill. At every point Mme. Ristori's triumph was complete. Even in her love-making one forgot her advanced age in her exquisite



MADAME RISTORI

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art, and when Elizabeth's death came at the end you breathed a sigh of relief from the tension in which she had held you and of positive gratitude to the artist who could weave such a spell of art around you. An actor of any years' standing is often asked: "What is the greatest piece of acting you ever saw?" I have no kind of hesitation in stating that my very biggest memories are Ristori's Elizabeth and Phelps's Sir Pertinax Macsycophant (*Man of the World*). When it is said that Mme. Ristori was in private a perfectly charming gentlewoman, kind and tolerant to all and most considerate to the humbler workers of the stage, it may be imagined the regard in which she was held. It was a most fortunate engagement for me. I pleased the audience in both plays. The Press of London were unanimous in my favour and especially as to my reading of blank verse, which gratified me very much, as a tribute to the valuable instruction of my kind old manageress, Mrs. Wyndham. Mme. Ristori could not have been more gracious to me. Years after, I was coming out of Wallack's, New York, where I had witnessed Henry Irving's Louis XI., and met her in the lobby. Recognising me, she threw her arms around me and gave me a continental salutation on both cheeks, which arrested the attention of a crowded lobby, and would have been almost embarrassing from a "meaner mortal."

One point that we chatted on was of special interest to me and others to whom I mentioned it at the time, and may be to some of my readers. When Salvini came to London first he made a huge hit, and yet the vogue did not last long, or, indeed, extend to a second visit. John Hollingshead, amongst his numerous speculations,



brought over shortly afterwards his great Italian rival, Signor Rossi. In their own country he was considered the better actor and many English people were inclined to think so, too; but he came second, when the taste was dead, and therefore did not do well; indeed, Hollingshead told me that he played King Lear one night at Drury Lane to gross receipts of £18 12s., which seemed incredible for a great actor playing a Shakespearean masterpiece in what was called the National theatre; but it was true! Both Rossi and Salvini had been members of Mme. Ristori's company at the same time, and she would not hear of any comparison between the two. She said: "Ah, yes! Salvini, attractive, showy, fascinating, but melodramatic. Rossi, *magnifique*, a poet!" And this great woman had been at times something more than all this. Statesmen entrusted her with secret missions during Italy's struggle for freedom, and in 1861 Count Cavour, the Italian Prime Minister, wrote to her: "Use that authority of yours, and I will not merely applaud in you the first actress of Europe, but the most efficacious co-operator in our diplomatic negotiation." All honour to the memory of Mme. Ristori, say I. The actor's calling is ennobled by such an artist and uplifted by the inclusion in its ranks of such a gentlewoman.

Strange to say, this engagement which brought me so much genuine pleasure was correspondingly saddened by a very serious accident in which I was the absolutely innocent prime mover. I had the great misfortune to stab poor Rignold under the following distressing circumstances. At the end of a strenuous and well-arranged sword fight I used to disarm him, and then ensued a struggle for a dirk which he drew and which

I finally succeeded in wresting from his hand and plunging into his ribs. It was only in my hand a second of time. On the first night he had looked at his weapon and remarked on its sharpness and danger, but took no steps to have it ground down or blunted. About the third or fourth night I found it penetrate in an unusual manner, and to my horror discovered I had wounded him very badly. He behaved like the plucky, typical Englishman he was, but the blade had gone perilously near the lung, and he bled terribly. After some delay a doctor came and staunched the wound, and we got him home. When I went to see him next day he was in bed, though on the road to recovery, and he tried to put me at my ease as much as possible by saying it was entirely his own fault. But as he had a wife and five children dependent on him, in addition to my grief for a very valued old friend, my feelings may be imagined until he was completely restored to health. Thomas Swinbourne took his place as Macbeth. I once read (I think it was in De Quincey) of the exquisite and dainty pleasure of feeling a sharp instrument entering human flesh. "God defend me from ever experiencing it again," say I.

From August to December, 1882, I was engaged by Augustus Harris to play in the Drury Lane autumn drama called *Pluck*, by Henry Pettitt. This author had almost a genius for constructing and writing melodrama, and his successes were many; but, unfortunately, *Pluck* did not turn out one of his best. It was well cast and played, and ran on for several weeks, but not to very great business. My success as Macduff had fired my ambition, and in November of that year I made up my

mind to "have a shot at the bigger game" of Macbeth. As I have stated, I had worked at the part for years, and had prepared a careful study of it. The best way to bring it before the public appeared to be by use of the word "benefit," but I did not feel that I had any right to ask my fellow artists to make any concessions for me; so I took the theatre and engaged as good a cast as I could procure, and paid each of them his own terms. My confrères included Thomas Swinbourne, John Ryder, Somerset, Jackson, Louise Moodie, and others. All were sound Shakespearean performers. Then I asked Ryder to run me once through the part, that I might not miss any good effect by not being cognizant of it. He cheerfully acceded to my wish, and added, "And I will play Banquo for you and manage your stage; any one who plays Macbeth for the first time does not need anything else to think about." The morning came (November 11), and I can say, without egotism, that I succeeded beyond my expectations. The audience was enthusiastic, and the Press (with one exception) unanimous in telling me I was on the right road, and full of encouragement for me to go on. The exception was one of the only critics I had a speaking acquaintance with (Clement Scott, of the *Daily Telegraph*), who took a curious tone, which seemed to infer that it was quite an impertinence on my part to study Shakespeare at all, and in his notice, as in many others about that time, appeared to wish to keep the Shakespearean field for the exclusive grazing of certain artists toward whom he was strongly biassed. It was rather strange, because he had been loud in my praises as

Macduff a few months previously, and, without my knowledge, a friend of mine, a learned Queen's Counsel of the day, "tackled" him on the subject one night at the Garrick Club, and found his mind and opinions perplexing and contradictory in the extreme. Any actor who goes in for a study of Macbeth is doing quite a deal for art's sake and for his personal gratification. It is not one of the grateful parts of Shakespeare. As a proof of this, it may be pointed out how few of the great ones of the past have left their mark in the part. It is only when you get on the stage in it and have settled down to know it, that you find out what a wilderness of words it is, and every line right "in the teeth of the audience." Not a moment when the audience is not antagonistic in its feeling towards the part. It is like rolling a barrel up a hill; not a point where you can take an "easy"! An old actor said to me when I was going to play it, and he heard I had worked at it for a long time, "Ah, my lad, it is a great mistake. The same study put into some other parts might get you a fortune; but not Macbeth!" And yet it always was (and is to-day) to me the most entrancing study, and one that an artist cannot bend his mind to without (I think) finding his knowledge and perception of human nature broadening at every page.

One of my great gratifications in my first essay was the behaviour of good old John Ryder. After I had settled up all my expenses and paid all my co-workers their terms (there was not a great balance) I went to him and said, "Now, old friend, what do I owe you?" He replied: "Not a farthing!" And he added in his

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heartiest manner : “ I like you, my lad, and I believe in you, and when you want to ‘ have a cut ’ at any of the other big parts that I am familiar with, come to me, and I’ll do the same again.” I was greatly affected by his kindness. Needless to say, I found some other way to show my appreciation, and a way that pleased him very much. The night of the performance I was tendered a dinner at the Albion, at which a number of old friends and well-wishers assembled, and all sorts of kind things were said to and of me; and my oldest “ pal,” who had been instrumental in my first appearance (Henry Melton), presented me with a sword which had been worn on the stage by Walter Montgomery and which, he said, he had been keeping for me for years. This sword I afterwards gave to the Players’ Club in New York for their museum of relics of the famous departed ones. (I presume it is there still.) And so ended one of the great events of my life, to which I always look back with very considerable pride. About this time I had several proposals of financial assistance, and one friend went so far as to offer to “ back ” me in a London theatre. I suppose it would have been wise to accept it, as so many others have done, but somehow, though always ready for a gamble on my own account, I shrank from the position of using (perhaps losing) other people’s money, and I hoped there would always be room in the calling for a salaried skilled workman. It is possible I may have missed some advancement by the course that I chose, but it is also certain that I have missed a lot of anxieties, and when the time comes for my final exit my responsibilities, as far as

investments are concerned, will be covered by my own roof-tree.

From March to June, 1883, I played at the Adelphi in *Stormbeaten*, a version by Robert Buchanan of his fine book *God and the Man*. Charles Warner acted the leading part, Christian Christianson, and I played the villain, Richard Orchardson. Miss Amy Roselle, Kate Christianson; C. W. Somerset and others were in a good cast. It was also a fine production, the great scene in the Arctic Sea being a splendid stage picture. The play was brilliantly noticed by the Press, but it was only a passable success, and did not realise the expectations formed by reading the book. One very funny incident occurred during the run of the play. The reader will remember that the feud which forms the basis of the very dramatic story is caused by the villain's shooting the hero's favourite dog. This dog, with us, was a really magnificent St. Bernard, which the managers (the Messrs. Gatti) bought for the play, and they handed him over to Warner to keep with him so that he might be quite accustomed to his voice and presence and perfectly at home with him at all points. Warner and Carlo became inseparable. On the night in question I had duly shot Carlo, in the first act, and one of the Gatti Brothers had taken him away and brought him back into the refreshment room in front of the theatre. By that time we were playing the last act, and years had supposed to elapse when, some door being open, Carlo heard Warner's voice on the stage. He gave an enormous yelp, rushed down the stairs, through the orchestra stalls, cleared the orchestra with a

bound, and shaking his tail with glee laid down at Warner's feet on the stage. His inartistic resuscitation at that juncture completely killed the end of the play, but as an individual effort he made a great success and secured the best applause of the evening. Charlie Warner was a fine, robust actor, full of virile power. His Tom Robinson in *Never Too Late to Mend* was a striking performance, and his Coupeau in Charles Reade's version of *L'Assommoir*, called *Drink*, was a perfect *tour de force* and made a great impression. His Harry Dornton (*Road to Ruin*) was excellent. His experiments in Shakespeare were not so successful. His tragic end in New York a few years ago came as a great shock to many, including the writer. Poor old Charlie! Only his intimates (of whom I was certainly one) knew that a great abiding sorrow had clouded nearly all his manhood, and in addition he had received his full share of "fortune's buffets." All which undoubtedly told on a naturally excitable temperament; but that he should "shuffle off this mortal coil" and seek "the undiscover'd country from whose bourne no traveller returns" with such dread determination was terribly sad, and caused a large circle of friends the keenest grief.

It seems almost impossible that thirty years have passed since that sweet woman Miss Mary Anderson first appeared in England, and set all London talking about her beauty and her talent. Yet so it is. The circumstances in which she came to us were as follows:— Henry Irving had contracted to take the whole Lyceum company, including Miss Terry, to America, under the management of Henry E. Abbey, and one of the condi-







*Photo]*

*[London Stereoscopic Co.*

J. H. BARNES AS INGOMAR

*[To face page 145*

tions of the contract was that Abbey should take the Lyceum off his (Irving's) hands. It was decided to bring Miss Anderson from America as an attraction to fill the vacancy. She had been a successful star in her own country for years, but I do not think her engagement in London was regarded with any overweening confidence. Abbey sailed away to New York to look after his attractions there, and left his London affairs in the hands of a particularly able lieutenant, Michael Gunn, manager of the Gaiety, Dublin. Miss Anderson opened on September 1, 1883, as Parthenia in *Ingomar*, and I had the honour of being selected to play the name-part with her. She succeeded with the public from the first line. *Ingomar* is a play which bears its date pretty badly. Adapted from the German by a lady dramatist, Maria Lovell, it is very much of a dramatic duet between Ingomar and Parthenia, and the former has often to act a brave barbarian with language lacking the necessary vigour and character. In his later years that great literary man and dramatist, Charles Reade, did a version of the play for Charles Warner called *The Son of the Wilderness*, which was a much more vigorous play. On the first night Miss Anderson had not, up to a point, tuned her splendid contralto speaking voice to the acoustics of the Lyceum (never a very easy theatre to speak in), and some playgoer in the gallery said : "Speak up, Mary !" Never having been used to that kind of interruption, she was, at first, disposed to resent it, but I was able to reassure her, in a whisper, that it was really only intended kindly, and she took the tendered advice good-humouredly, and made a very great hit

indeed, and receiving an ovation at the end of the play. *Ingomar* did not, however, draw much more than working expenses. It was followed in a short time with *The Lady of Lyons*, with a strong cast, including William Farren, Mrs. Billington, Mrs. Arthur Stirling, and others. I played Claude Melnotte, but I had grown rather too bulky in physique to give the idea of so ultra-romantic a part, and I did not fancy myself in it very much. Miss Anderson again looked lovely as Pauline, and made another stride in the favour of the London public. Still the big event was to come. During the run of *The Lady of Lyons* our late great King and his ever-popular consort, our beloved Queen Dowager (then Prince and Princess of Wales), visited the theatre, and after certain inquiries by the Prince he sent for Miss Anderson and presented her to the Princess, who gave her the bouquet that she was carrying. A small thing, perhaps, and Miss Anderson's stepfather and manager (Dr. Griffin) affected to take little notice of it, but he did not know what weight it had with the ladies of English society. However, he soon found out. The business improved appreciably the next day; and when we, in a short time, produced *Pygmalion and Galatea*, the success was complete. For weeks and months the Lyceum was scarcely large enough to hold the audiences that worshipped at the shrine of the new star. She certainly did look divine in her white robe as Galatea, her glorious young womanhood was set off thereby to perfection, and each night saw the theatre crowded with "fair women and brave men," and all that was best and brainiest in our land. It was a curious fact that she was almost more



*Photo*

*[The "Vander Vejde Light"]*

MISS MARY ANDERSON AS GALATEA

*[To face page 146]*







*Photo]*

*[London Stereoscopic Co.*

J. H. BARNES AS PYGMALION

*[To face page 147*

admired by the ladies of England than by the men ; but, as is always the case, the latter followed where the former led. It was a most pleasant season, and in a thousand little ways she endeared herself to all of us. Personally I recall with the liveliest gratitude her great sympathy with me in a domestic sorrow, and I have always kept a very warm spot in my heart for this clever and gentle comrade.

The production of *Pygmalion and Galatea* was very nearly marred by a serious situation that arose. Miss Anderson had played the part of Galatea a great deal in America, and had been used to making certain effects and points. W. S. Gilbert, the author, was a great power in those days and more than ordinarily dogmatic ; and he objected strongly to some of these effects and points, with the result that the two came to loggerheads one day. The rehearsal was dismissed, and things looked black, but the diplomatic Michael Gunn took Gilbert out to luncheon, and when we met next day the clouds had rolled by and the sky was clear again. The cast was a good one : Amy Roselle, Cynisca (excellent) ; Harry Kemble, Chrysos ; Frank Macklin, Leucippe ; Mrs. Billington, Daphne ; the writer, Pygmalion ; and all the other parts well filled. For the first few weeks I also played Jasper Carew in *A Sheep in Wolf's Clothing* as a first piece. This was also well east. Later on, Gilbert having finished, for Miss Anderson, his fine one-act play *Comedy and Tragedy*, we rehearsed and produced it in January 1884. Another great hit, and we ran on merrily to crowded houses until Easter. In *Comedy and Tragedy* I played the Duc d'Orleans, Regent of France, and



George Alexander came over from the St. James's, by permission of Messrs. Hare and Kendal, to play the husband, d'Aulnay.

At Easter, 1884, another American star came to the Lyceum, viz. Lawrence Barrett, with a play called *Yorick's Love*, which was not very successful. Meantime Miss Anderson with her entire company went on a short tour of the English provinces, visiting Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Dublin, and Birmingham. Everywhere she was received with acclamation, and our tour was a veritable triumphal march. In Dublin (a city ever susceptible to the influence of beauty) the students of Trinity College insisted on dragging her carriage through the streets. Some slight changes had taken place in the company for the tour. My old friend, William Rignold, joined us, and I gave up the Duc d'Orleans in *Comedy and Tragedy* to him and played d'Aulnay at Miss Anderson's request. "Rowley" Buckstone, so popular in America, was also with us. One of the great pleasures of the tour was the fact that it brought me into a close friendship with that "prince of good fellows," Henry Kemble, which continued uninterruptedly up to his death in recent years. In all my life I never met a bigger-hearted man or more thorough gentleman. Nothing on earth could make him do or think a mean or unworthy thing. His soul was that of a patrician. He had his foibles doubtless! Who has not? But they were far outweighed by his sterling qualities. A real humorist! The stories of dear old "Beetle" would fill many pages, but like so many of the strongly marked characters of the stage

they would be, to an extent, pointless without some sort of imitation of the original's manner. One of his very strongest traits was his absolute fearlessness in saying what he thought of any man or his actions, and that to his face for choice. I remember he and W. S. Gilbert had a difference of opinion during the rehearsals of *Pygmalion and Galatea*, and he astonished us all by saying to that autocratic author in his most sententious manner: "Doubtless you think yourself a very clever person, Mr. Gilbert, but I, for one, fail to see it."

During the last week of the tour, in Birmingham, I received an offer by cable to play the leading business of the Union Square Theatre, New York, in the autumn. Now this theatre, under the management of Messrs. Sheridan Shook and A. M. Palmer, had long been about the foremost in the United States. The terms offered me were excellent, and I closed with them at once; and after a good holiday I took all my belongings to New York with me and began my engagement there on October 6, 1884. But, unfortunately, I was destined to suffer a great disappointment. Mr. Shook was still the financial partner, but Mr. Palmer had left, and had gone into management at the Madison Square Theatre. His successor, Mr. James Collier, whose experience had been gained in a broader and coarser field of work, was in no way his equal in either judgment of plays or stage management, and I had a most disastrous season as regards plays and parts. During the six months covered by my engagement we tried four plays—*The Artist's Daughter*, *Duprez and Son* (a new version of *L'Aveugle*), by the author attached to the

theatre, one Cazauran ; *Three Wives to One Husband*, a farcical comedy, and *The Prisoner for Life*, a poor melodrama. Not one of them was nearly a good play, and in not one of them had I a part with any scope to justify my selection for the position. It was rather heartbreaking, and, in the circumstances, I was not sorry when my time was up.



J. H. BARNES IN "A PRISONER FOR LIFE"

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## XVII

I HAD gone out to New York on the s.s. *Grecian Monarch* (Captain Bristow), and it so fell out that the same ship was sailing home on the day that my engagement ended. With some friends, we were a party of seven, and the managers of the line consented to let the boat lay over one tide for us, so that I played up to and inclusive of Saturday night and went on board after the performance and sailed away before we were up in the morning. Of course, there was not a very full list of passengers, or this could not have been arranged. I reached London on April 14, 1885. The Union Square company were good enough and strong enough for anything if we had been provided with material : Sara Jewett, Maude Harrison, Eloise Willes, Ida Vernon, John Parselle (an old English actor who died during the season), James Stoddart, Jack Mason (now one of America's best actors and most successful stars). Stoddart was a delightful comrade and an admirable actor, a member of an old Liverpool theatrical family, very strong in forcible, rough parts of a hard nature. The American papers praised his Penholder on *One Touch of Nature* very highly, but he could not compare with Ben Webster to any one who had seen the latter. He was lacking in that great actor's tenderness. I only saw Ben Webster in two or three parts, and

those quite in his decline, but he was something very like a genius, without doubt. H. J. Byron, a good judge, once told me he was the greatest actor that he ever saw, and he added : " I have seen him play everything, from tragedy to country boys, and all better than anybody else."

During my season at Union Square one of my favourite pastimes was attending the sales at " Tattersall's of New York," then under the management of a very able man, William (" Billy ") Easton, a model auctioneer and a great authority on all matters pertaining to horses, of which I have always been very fond ; and it was during this season that poor Fred Archer, the famous jockey, whom I had known intimately in England, came out to New York with his friend Captain Bowling to try to forget his grief in the loss of his wife. We saw a great deal of each other. I have rarely met a man so bowed down with sorrow. He wanted to start back to England almost as soon as he had landed, but we persuaded him, amongst us, that he could do nothing at home in the off-season of racing, and he finally carried out his original intention and went on to Texas, where Lord Aylesford had a big ranch, and where he stayed some weeks, getting back to England in time to " get into harness " for the resumption of his work in the spring. I wonder if the real story of the two years preceding his tragic death has ever been known or told, and I wonder if I gauged the facts aright ? I am inclined to think I did. He made me his confidant oftentimes in New York, and also when I returned to England ; finding me sympathetic he talked very freely to me. When I heard of his







FRED ARCHER (1885)

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sad end I was back in the United States, in Philadelphia, and I sent a cable of condolence to his people at Newmarket and in my mind pieced together what I knew of his later life as thus : Poor Fred had not had many advantages in his youth, and as he, by degrees, rose to his big position he got to know and like a better class of people and surroundings, but he was without any resources within himself. He did not care for reading at all. When he married the well-educated daughter of a rich trainer she brought something into his life that he had never known before, and his greatest delight was to get home and listen to her playing the piano and her animated well-read conversation. When she was taken from him the void was truly awful, and was never filled or lost sight of. He has referred to it, in talking to me, at the most extraordinary and unexpected moments ; once after one of his most vigorous finishes at Kempton. And so two years dragged on, and then came that dreadful typhoid and the delirium succeeding it, when, left alone by accident, his poor mind recurred to the one topic that was always uppermost, and he took matters into his own hands and put an end to everything. Fred Archer was a great man in his walk of life ! To those who knew something of racing his position sometimes appeared anomalous. His influence was almost too potent and powerful ! As an instance of the thoroughness which gained him so much eminence, the following may be interesting and instructive :—One evening in my garden at Teddington, after a Kempton meeting, there being racing at Windsor next day, he arranged with me to accompany him to the latter place unusually early on the following

morning. We started; and I gathered from his manner that he was not in a communicative mood, so I did not bother him. Arrived at Windsor still very early, we started for the course, and once there, with no one about except the waiters putting out refreshments, etc., he proposed a walk round the course, which was very heavy from much recent rain. At the bend (through some osier beds) he began to prod the ground with his stick and heel, and then it all came out. He said: "I am riding a horse for Baird in the first race to-day [a maiden plate]. If I can keep him on fairly sound going he will win at a good price; but if he puts one foot in the mud he will shut up like a clasp-knife." All this was happening whilst some of his rival jockeys were still asleep in London! He rode the horse in question, and won at 100 to 15. And people sometimes wonder how other people become great. If Carlyle, who said, "Genius meant an infinite capacity for taking trouble," was right, surely Archer might be cited as a notable example.

In 1885 the theatrical profession was not as crowded as it is to-day, and artists who knew their business had less trouble in procuring engagements. At least, that was my experience. I had settled my autumn arrangements before leaving New York in April and, after a summer holiday on the river, I joined Mrs. Bernard Beere for her tour of the British provincial towns to play Loris Ipanoff (*Fedora*) and Sir Charles Pomander (*Masks and Faces*). An exceeding pleasant engagement. "Bernie," as her friends called her, was a good sort, a thorough chum, and many little considerations were shown to her company both by her





*Photo]*

*[Kingsbury and Notcutt*

CHARLES H. E. BROOKFIELD AS TRIPLET

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and her business manager, Charles Terry (brother of Ellen and Fred of that name). Travelling was made pleasant. Business was excellent and the company were most agreeable. It included C. H. E. " (Charlie ") Brookfield late joint reader of plays to the Lord Chamberlain, a delightful companion, very witty, also very cynical at times; and that charming little lady, Miss Julia Gwynne (Mrs. George Edwardes). Brookfield left us towards the end of the tour, and my old friend, James Fernandez, took his place as Triplet, which was also most agreeable to me. Mrs. Beere was the original Fedora in England, and gave an admirable performance of the part on much the same lines as, though by no means an imitation of, Sarah Bernhardt. She was also excellent in *Peg Woffington*, full of fun, good nature, and humanity. Brookfield's de Sirieux (*Fedora*) and Triplet were both most artistic; and, needless to say, the latter part suffered nothing in the skilled hands of Fernandez when he succeeded to it. The Press and public were kind to us wherever we went, and altogether we were very jolly. We were at Leicester for the race week, and staying at "The Bell." Mrs. Beere gave a birthday supper there to a lot of friends (some came from London), and insisted on my asking Fred Archer, who was also in the hotel. He was greatly pleased with the invitation, and next day, on the course, he gave us a tip which, I fancy, paid a goodly portion of Mrs. B.'s expenses. One specially pleasant evening I recall during this tour. Mr. George Edwardes came down to Scarborough to meet his wife, and invited a few of us to dinner at the Grand Hotel on Sunday evening. Of course, we dined well, and afterwards that

brilliant musician Alfred Cellier sat at the piano and entertained us most delightfully with all sorts of scraps and memories and instances of musical plagiarisms for hours. What a grand musician he was, and how many big men, in music, whose names are household words, made use of his almost unequalled knowledge when they found themselves "tied in a knot" in some difficult matter of orchestration, etc. I remember this particular evening he spoke of the perfection and beauty of Gray's "Elegy" as a poem, and said how much he should like to set it to music, a thing he afterwards did to the delight of thousands of musical connoisseurs.

The tour ended in December, and after a happy home Christmas, cheered by the bright company of two American friends, I soon "got into harness" again and reappeared at the St. James's, still under the management of Messrs. Hare and Kendal, on February 13, 1886, in a comedy-drama called *Antoinette Rigaud*, adapted from a French play of the same name. In this performance it was destined that "history should repeat itself"! As in my former engagement at this theatre, I had a great scene with Mrs. Kendal, and again with her splendidly artistic assistance, I made an unquestionable success and met with the emphatic approval of Press and public. Some of the company had seen the play in Paris. I was unable to do so, but I was told that my part made little or no impression in the French performance. I don't know what changes were wrought in the progress of adaptation, but certainly in the St. James's production it worked out finely, and I doubt if I ever did myself more good with one class, viz. the dramatic authors of the day, than in this

particular character. One of the loudest in my praise on the first night was A. W. Dubourg, part author of *New Men and Old Acres*. The play was, however, not an overwhelming success, and only ran until May 21. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal and John Hare were in the cast, and a charming young American actress whom I have lost sight of entirely, Miss Linda Deitz. Hare, as in all cases at the St. James's, produced the play with the utmost care.

This may be a fitting point for me to place on record my emphatic opinion that Mrs. Kendal is by all odds the best actress that the English stage has produced in my generation. As a playgoer and stage-dreamer, I saw her make her first appearance in London as Miss Madge Robertson in a melodrama at Drury Lane entitled *The Great City*, a version of Dickens's *Great Expectations*, by Andrew Halliday, in 1867. In the 'sixties I saw her in all her performances with the fine old Haymarket company (and what a company it was! with Buckstone, Compton, Howe, Chippendale, Mrs. Chippendale, and others); in the old comedies, in support of E. A. Sothorn; in Gilbert's fairy comedies, *The Wicked World*, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, etc., and I saw her at the Gaiety and elsewhere; and I never saw her play a part in which she failed to win my admiration. I little dreamed in those days that it would ever be my lot to play with her, and yet it has fallen out that I have had the happiness of being associated with her in many big plays and scenes, and happy indeed was the man who had her invaluable aid. If he could not act with her to help him he might well take himself to task as to whether he was one of those who had mistaken a



taste for a talent in the choice of his profession. Good in everything, brilliant in most, she was a splendid comedienne and absolutely unapproachable in parts of strongly marked womanliness and gentle pathos, and, like all the great artists, male and female, of my experience, she went *down* for her finest effects—not *up*; and made her most certain and profound impressions by apparently simple means. The English stage should be proud of such an actress, and I doubt if the younger members of the profession nowadays are able to realise how superb she was.

During her later years the puny carpers tried in vain to pick holes in her invulnerable armour of art and womanhood. Both were unassailable, and in her dignified retirement she stands to-day, reminding one as much as anything of Tennyson's splendid description of the lion and the dogs in his tragedy of *The Cup*.

## XVIII

OF W. H. Kendal almost as much may be said. I saw him make his first appearance in London at the Haymarket in the 'sixties in a farce. I saw him play an eccentric light comedy part with the elder Sothorn in a play called *A Wife Well Won*, in which he gave an inimitable performance, and made the star "put his best foot foremost," indeed. He played and sang delightfully in a burlesque entitled *The Frightful Hair*, a travesty of a drama played at the Lyceum by Bandmann, entitled *The Rightful Heir*. (He had a most pleasing singing voice.) I saw him play all through the Haymarket repertory of old comedies. He was much the best Young Marlow I have ever seen. No one carried himself better or looked more graceful in the Georgian costume. His figure was so straight, and he wore his clothes so well. I followed him through all his career. As a light and eccentric comedian he has had no rival, in my judgment, since Charles Mathews. I suppose it would appear foolish when two great artists, man and wife, have had a conspicuously successful career and made a handsome fortune to suggest even that any little thing was a mistake, but it is just possible that in some of their very successful plays he occasionally "side-stepped" into parts of deeper feeling, in which he was not quite so convincing. But his per-

formances in *A Scrap of Paper*, *The Queen's Shilling*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, and a remarkably fine one in *Impulse*, and, indeed, in every shade and phase of light comedy, left nothing to be desired.

Happily, the deserved and pronounced appreciation of the public of two hemispheres placed the Kendals above any financial consideration whatever, and when the time came for them to take their leave of the profession that they had adorned they did so, as they had always worked in it, without charlatanism or ostentation. Long may they live to enjoy their well-earned retirement, say I, with all my heart.

Of the third partner in the firm, Mr. Hare (now Sir John), similar and equally emphatic eulogy may well be written. An artist to the very roots of his hair, he has done some perfectly splendid work in connection with the modern stage, and his knighthood came as no surprise but as a matter of great rejoicing to a very wide circle of friends and admirers. It was always perfectly satisfying, often astonishing, to watch his cameo-like performances, especially of modern parts. I hardly think he shone so brightly in his few attempts at classic or conventional rôles. His art was essentially of the mimetic school, but most finished. If it were possible to admire anything more than his acting of the parts that he made his own, commend me to his stage management. Just now several of the up-to-date men are getting tremendous kudos for productions of the very up-to-date plays. One would think when reading the notices of the Press that the millennium of stage management had arrived. Dear me! London soon forgets, and some of the gentlemen who assume

to direct its judgment have very short memories. I have worked with all sorts of stage managers, and I say as forcibly as I can within the limits of taste that no one alive could give John Hare an ounce as a stage manager. To enumerate his successful productions would mean a very long list indeed, but in atmosphere, perfection of detail, good taste, and completeness he could easily hold his own with any modern man that I have seen. He was terribly in earnest in his work, and this very earnestness made him at times fidgety and even a little irritable, but he was always working for the general good effect, as opposed to any individual performance, and it was a lesson in artistic discipline to see the way both Mr. and Mrs. Kendal deferred to his ideas. Their association was in every way a worthy one, and of the utmost value to the contemporary stage.

After the St. James's engagement I played a part in a drama entitled *By Land and Sea*, by J. L. Shine and J. A. Campbell, at the Royal, Birmingham, for a trial. It seemed to go very well, but has not, I think, been played since.

On June 19, 1886, I took up Maurice Barrymore's part of Louis Percival in *Jim the Penman* at the Haymarket in the original run of the play, in which Lady Monekton appeared. Barrymore had to return to America. The season closed on July 30.

I was then engaged by Mrs. Conover to play Macbeth (my mania) at the Olympic. We produced it by way of rehearsal at Leicester on August 16 and came to London on August 26. Mrs. Conover was a very pleasant little lady of Danish extraction, who was the

possessor of a considerable sum of money. She took the Olympic as a speculation, and I fear it proved a disastrous one for her in more ways than one. After quite a liberal management, playing herself in modern dramas, etc., she was fired with an ambition to tackle Lady Macbeth, and it must be stated that the part was quite beyond her. The whole production, though carefully done by Mr. T. Swinbourne, was dominated by her comparative failure, and we were not successful artistically or financially. I played Macbeth up to Friday, September 17, and left after the performance for Liverpool, whence I sailed on September 18 on the s.s. *Aurania* to take up a good engagement that I had settled some time previously to support Miss Fanny Davenport in an extended tour of the United States in a repertory which embraced *Fedora*, *Much Ado*, *As You Like It*, *London Assurance*, *Oliver Twist*, *Lady of Lyons*, and *School for Scandal*. *Macbeth*, *Medea*, and *The Hunchback* were to have been included, but we found the foregoing list enough. We opened at Union Square, New York, October 11, 1886, in *Much Ado*. The tour was under the management of Miss Davenport's husband (Mr. E. H. Price), and we went over all the States east of the Rockies. I think Miss Davenport was one of the best all-round actresses that America has produced in my time. She was a thoroughly conscientious artist, good in everything and excellent in many parts. She was a beautiful woman, tall and with a handsome face, and a kindly, good-natured creature, but unfortunately when I was with her she was not in the enjoyment of good health. At the time she secured the American rights of *Fedora* from Sardou, some two or three years

before, she had grown unduly stout, and before she began to play the part she went through a rigorous course of Banting somewhere in Europe, and it so completely undermined her health that she had become a martyr to dyspepsia and could hardly digest a biscuit. But it made little difference to her admirable work, with which it was a pleasure to be associated. She was a very fine Fedora. I think she got more out of the strenuous first act than either Bernhardt or Mrs. Beere, and I had seen them both before I saw her. She was a good Rosalind, Lady Teazle, and Lady Gay Spanker, a capital Nancy Sikes, and in many respects the best Beatrice that I have ever seen. *Much Ado* is a play I have been a great deal associated with and have played in many hundred times altogether, and, in my judgment, the play gains very much in effect if the Benedick and Beatrice are a swashbuckler soldierly man and a fine womanly woman. Once let these two characters suggest, in ever so small a degree, æsthetic temperaments, and the play loses much in the ultimate comedy situations of their love-making. In this respect Miss Davenport was ideal. She was so much the mistress of herself and of her own mind, and seemed so unlikely to fall in love. I did my best to back her up in this view; and in many cities, notably New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, our success was very emphatic, not only for ourselves, but as proving we were successfully interpreting the sense of the great master. It will ill become me and would be diametrically opposed to the intention that I announced in my opening chapter to endeavour to convey an idea of the kind things said of us, but they were very gratifying indeed. Miss Daven-

port died in 1898. The company were good and well balanced. They included Mr. Wilton Lackaye, then playing smaller parts, but since become a successful American star. Our usual Saturday night bill was *London Assurance* and the short version of *Oliver Twist*, in which E. H. Price (quite a good actor) played Bill Sikes. I used to enjoy this programme. I made Dazzle as well-groomed and dashing a part as I could, and when I came on in the characteristically villainous make-up as Fagin the audience usually gave me a good round of applause for the complete and absolute disguise. As showing the possibilities for investment of capital in American cities, I recall that Miss Davenport bought some lots on the outskirts of Chicago in the January of 1887, and sold them in the following April at a profit of 18,000 dollars, the completed deeds never having been made out to her. We were in New Orleans for Mardi Gras, which was a great event in those days, and, I suppose, is still, but I was not greatly impressed with the street procession. It seemed to me a sort of poor Lord Mayor's Show, but the festivities and fancy dress balls, etc., in the evenings were very gay and amusing, and many of the Southern ladies with their wonderful opaque complexions and dark eyes were very beautiful. During this tour, too, I got my first sight and impression of Florida, with its soft, languorous climate, its orange groves, its semi-tropical foliage, and its alligators. St. Augustine, partly old Spanish, was most interesting. There were grand modern hotels replete with every luxury, and also an old-time fort, in which a large party of Indians were quartered when I was there whilst some question of their rights was being

argued in Washington. One of these "noble red men," with the absolutely most gruesome and cadaverous face that I ever saw, was pointed out to me as being one hundred years old, and as having captured one hundred scalps. He was usually sitting in the sun on a low wall, and even the little children of his tribe drew away from him in fear as they passed him. All day he sat muttering to himself, and he seemed particularly vehement at sight of me. I don't know if my (then) ample locks stimulated his craving for further deeds of cruelty. Could he see them now that "the gentleman with the hour-glass" has worked his will, he would be less likely to notice them, I feel sure. Whilst playing a return visit in New York I appeared with Miss Davenport in a big benefit organised by Joseph Jefferson at Wallack's for Mr. Couldock, a fine old English actor previously mentioned (May 1887), and during our visit to Boston I met that great actor, William Warren, who for so many years was attached to the Boston Museum though constantly receiving tempting offers from New York and elsewhere. He was a very great artist; indeed, I have rarely seen a better. His performances of the old comedies and many other parts were quite exceptional, and he was a delightful personality as well. Many were the happy hours spent with him in dear old Miss Fisher's house in Bullfinch Place, where he lived all his days and where he used to preside at the table and sometimes carve the English joint. Born in 1812, he retired at seventy years of age in 1882, and died in 1888, beloved and respected by everybody. Boston stood with bowed head at his funeral, and his memory is very green until this day. One of his great jokes was



about his cousin Joseph Jefferson's playing of Bob Acres in *The Rivals*, a performance which did not meet with Warren's approval. Asked what Jefferson was doing that season, he replied: "He's playing Bob Acres in *The Rivals*, and Sheridan forty miles away."

At the end of the foregoing interesting tour I sailed for home on the N. G. Lloyd s.s. *Fulda*, and arrived on May 30, 1887.

## XIX

IN July, 1887, the Princess's Theatre was opened in the name of a lady from America unknown in London—Miss Grace Hawthorne. The business manager was Mr. W. W. Kelly, whose home nickname was “Hustler” Kelly. He soon proved that he had not acquired the appellation without reason. I was engaged as leading man, and we opened with a real, good, old-fashioned melodrama, *The Shadows of a Great City*, which had been a huge success in the United States. The English rights had been acquired by Mr. W. Calder, who had toured with it in the provinces for some months previously, and he was responsible for the production at the Princess's on sharing terms. It was an excellent play of its kind, and very soon proved a *bona fide* success. Full of good parts which were well cast, it first of all drew large pits and galleries, and finally the more fashionable parts of the house began to follow suit. In the cast were Miss Mary Rorke, Miss Cicely Richards, who gave an admirable performance of a fine character part just in her way, Harry Nicholls, Harry Parker, the writer, and also W. L. Abingdon, who here made his first appearance in London. When Nicholls left for his engagement at Drury Lane, J. L. Shine took his place. It ran until December, and I believe would have gone longer but that Miss Hawthorne

desired to act, and I do not think it was pushed very much towards the end for more than one reason. I remained under the same management for fourteen months. We produced during that time *Siberia*, by Bartley Campbell, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Hume and Law's *Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, and a revival of *The Shadows of a Great City*, which took me up to September 11, 1888. It was a curious season, and although business was not always what we could wish it was truly remarkable how Mr. Kelly triumphed over difficulties as they arose—and they did! No artist ever knew him fail to respect his obligations. The same business acumen has since then made him a most successful touring and provincial manager, and assuredly brought grist to the mill in goodly quantities.

*The Mystery of a Hansom Cab* was founded on a book by Fergus Hume which had made a great popular success at that time, and much was hoped for from the play. Unfortunately, it was found lacking in the qualities that make for success, and indeed was a comparative failure; so that extraordinary man, John Coleman, was brought in to give it, if possible, the necessary fillip. It then ran about three months, but was only a moderate success after all. In speaking of John Coleman as an extraordinary man I don't think I am overstating the fact. A provincial manager of considerable experience, quite a well-read man, he was an actor of the most grandiloquent and (shall I say?) magnificent methods. He had not even a nodding acquaintance with any semblance of human nature, and, moreover, he was without exception the most case-hardened man in vanity I have ever encountered.

Nothing you could say in the way of fulsome flattery that he would not accept as his just desert; and his belief in himself, his glorious egotism, and his delight in the use of long words and grandiose sentences were almost unbelievable. Unfortunately, the wonderful stories of him must perforce lose much of their point because one is not able to convey to the reader some idea of his method of speaking; but his flights of language were, nevertheless, often remarkable. To an open-mouthed super he once said: "My dear sir, will you endeavour to demonstrate to the denizens of the auditorium that you are playing a character unlike anything of the present day? And when you ascend the raking piece and leave the stage be good enough to emit a greasy laugh of truculent defiance." To an equally astonished waiter at a Lyceum Fund supper he said: "Would it be *infra dig.* for me to ask for a little more fish? Heaven knows I am no *gourmand*, but really these infinitesimal portions are positively annoying." I met him once when he was about to produce a version that he had prepared of *Pericles* at Stratford-on-Avon, and in the blandest manner he said to me in speaking of it: "And I flatter myself that I, for once, have improved on the Immortal Bard." On another occasion I came across him when announcements had appeared that Lewis Waller intended to produce *Henry V.* (This was a part in which John greatly fancied himself. I saw him play it, oh, my!) He said to me: "My dear Barnes, have you seen it announced that Lewis Waller is about to enact *Henry V.*?" I replied: "I had." He stroked his full-blown moustache and said: "Poor-r-r wor-r-r-m!"

He loved to address an audience at all times, and would stop in a soliloquy to do so if there were a chance. Once in Lincoln, in playing Claude Melnotte he came to the point some lines before the end—"That voice? thou art——?" John Coleman, "Thy h-u-s-b-a-n-d!" A man walked out of the rather empty pit, with heavy boots resounding. John advanced to the footlights, and said: "My dear sir, this play has not yet concluded." The man looked round, paused, and made reply: "No; I dare say not, John; but I've seen as much as I want," and pursued his way to the door, not in the least nonplussed.

Coleman's intimate contemporaries well remember two wonderful stories he used to tell of himself when in a convivial mood. One was of some young sportsmen in the Theatre Royal, Lincoln, and the other of an undergraduate in a private box at Cambridge. Neither would score much without a reproduction of his style. To his dying day he never realised that his hearers were laughing at him, and not with him, but that was his peculiarity. His airy self-complacency was never irksome; it was so splendidly amusing.

In the autumn of 1887 I was specially engaged to create a part at a *matinée* at Drury Lane in a most ambitious play entitled *Nitocris*, by Miss Clo. Graves. This, I think, ought to have been a great event—it was *the* work of a very clever woman's life, and was a really fine effort, with which I think she had cruelly bad luck. First, she could not get the artists whom she wanted for many of the parts. Secondly, the principal one was played by a great personal friend of the authoress, who was quite unable to do it adequate justice. Lastly,

we rehearsed it on the stage at Drury Lane during the production of two different pantomimes (one for the home theatre and another for the Tyne Theatre, Newcastle), without the hammers ever ceasing to knock, and it is a literal truth that the first time we ever heard our own voices in the play was on the morning we played it. My part, Phedaspes, was a fine one—longer than Hamlet. The whole thing was rather a shame, and I do not know how she bore it. If that play were taken in hand by some brilliant producing manager at a good theatre and her very fine ideas carried out, it would not surprise me a bit if it were a great success even now. (Mem. for Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree.)

On October 1, 1888, I rejoined Miss Mary Anderson for her tour of the English provinces and the United States, and, as it turned out, her last. It was particularly pleasant to be with her again, I was very much gratified to hear of a kind expression made use of by her mother (Mrs. Griffin) when she heard of my engagement, which, not being said in my presence, or where she could know it would reach me, was undoubtedly sincere. During the time I had been engaged elsewhere, Miss Anderson had produced several plays in London, *The Hunchback*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Winter's Tale* among them. In the last-named she doubled the parts of Hermione and Perdita, and in the latter character she executed a country dance in one scene with an abandon and grace worthy of Pavlova. To see this beautiful and dainty young lady throwing herself with evident relish into such a revel was quite irresistible to the public, and the piece was a huge success for nearly a whole season at the London Lyceum,

as it was wherever we played it. Forbes-Robertson had been the Leontes in London. I succeeded him on tour. We played four weeks in Great Britain up to Dublin, where we finished on a Saturday night and dropped down to Queenstown and sailed from there by the s.s. *Umbria* on Sunday morning. I remember it was one of the worst storms known for years. The sea was running "hills high" in Queenstown Harbour, and the *Umbria* was seven hours late coming down Channel from Liverpool; so the state of the Atlantic for our first few days may be imagined. It was quite awful. Our repertory included *The Winter's Tale*, *Ingomar*, *The Lady of Lyons*, *Pygmalion and Galatea*, *Comedy and Tragedy*, etc. *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, and *The Cup* were to have been played; indeed, we did the first of these three on the Saturday night in Manchester, but through circumstances we did not do it again, or either of the other two, nor were they required. The tour was under the management of Abbey, Schoeffel, and Grau. We opened at Wallack's, New York, early in November. The Press notices were fine and the business enormous. The company were good, comprising Mrs. Billington, Mrs. Charles Calvert, J. G. Taylor, John Maclean, Herbert Waring, George Warde, G. M. Yorke, Arthur Lewis and his wife (Zeffie Tilbury, daughter of Miss Lydia Thompson), myself, and others. We stayed in New York four weeks before proceeding on the road. During our time there I made a pilgrimage, representing Miss Anderson, to the unveiling of the monument to dear old John McCullough in Mount Moriah Cemetery in the outskirts of Philadelphia. The trip was arranged and piloted by poor

John's old manager, genial "Billy" Connor, then manager of the St. James's Hotel, New York. We had a special Pullman; lunch was served on the way there, and dinner on the return journey, which occupied in all about seven hours. I got back only just in time for the evening performance. It was a pleasure, if a sad one, to pay a last tribute to the memory of so good a fellow. One of the party on that occasion was William Winter, of the New York *Tribune*, who read one of his charming and characteristic appreciations of the dear old comrade who rested there, which will be found now amongst his published poems.

During our stay in New York an American actor named Louis Aldrich started a somewhat wild movement which aimed at passing an Act through Congress to exclude all English actors from the American stage or to put us on the same basis as skilled labour. He was desperately in earnest in collecting signatures to his petition, and particularly bitter in his denunciations of Miss Anderson's company, who were all English at the time. This was the more curious as he had spent the previous summer in London, where every kind of courtesy was shown him and he was almost fêted. I ventured to think it a fit subject for a joke, and, at the instigation of some one in authority, I wrote a column which appeared in the New York *Herald*, taking the form of an old-time lampoon. It rather "touched the spot" and secured for him some little ridicule, which made him specially angry with me, personally, though we had always been good "pals" previously. One day before a lot of mutual acquaintances he lost his temper badly, and, advancing very rudely and threateningly, he



said : “ And you, by gad, *you !* can’t set your foot on our stage in two years from to-day.” I replied without temper : “ My dear Louis, I have read of a lineal ancestor of yours who commanded the sun to stand still ; but, for Heaven’s sake, don’t imagine it runs in the family.” I am afraid this allusion to his ancestry was scarcely kind, but I had received very considerable provocation. The whole matter was eventually quashed completely by the action of that fine artist and gentleman, Joseph Jefferson, who denounced it roundly, and all the leading actors of America, including Edwin Booth, followed suit.

## XX

AFTER leaving New York our progress through the country was everywhere most successful. Business was enormous, and we were as happy a band of comrades as could be found. And yet our contentment was to have a rude awakening. After twenty weeks (six short of the minimum length of our contracts), Miss Anderson was taken ill with a nervous break-down in Washington, and was unable to continue her engagement. I have never seen it stated exactly what happened, or the cause of it. Let me try and supply the information as I observed it at the time. There was no doubt she was greatly overworked. We had not a properly efficient stage manager with us, and in her earnest determination to please the public she was in the habit of attending most of the rehearsals, a labour which she ought to have been spared, and indeed kept from. When we got to St. Louis, the agent-in-advance had some misunderstanding with certain members of the Press about the number of free admissions, and they proceeded to "get back" at him through his star. One of them, in a cowardly way, threw cold water on her religion, and even went so far as to print sketches of her at confessional. Now, no doubt could possibly exist that Miss Anderson was a thoroughly devout Catholic, and in her overwrought, overworked nervous

condition this affected her very keenly. I remember her saying to me, with great pathos in her tones and almost tears in her eyes, "Barnsey" (which was her own name for me), "I *did* think a woman could have her religion to herself!"

From St. Louis we went on to Louisville, Kentucky, which was her home city. There I met that eccentric politician, Henry Waterson, who was a great power all through the Southern States, and in the Democratic Party, and was once named as Vice-President of the United States. From Louisville to Cincinnati and from there to Washington, where we arrived on Sunday night, March 3, 1889, the night before the inauguration of President Harrison. To those who have never been in Washington on these occasions, what happens must sound like a fairy story or a "tar-i-diddle." Every bed in every hotel is taken; the theatres, and sometimes even the churches and chapels are utilised, and you are lucky if you get a bed at all. On this occasion I was fortunate enough to get a truckle bed in a passage in a fairly good hotel. The sight on Inauguration Day is very striking. Few cities lend themselves to such a display as Washington does. The place is so beautifully laid out, and Pennsylvania Avenue, with its magnificent width and sweep from the Capitol to the White House, is an ideal street for a procession. On these occasions, this procession extends for miles and takes hours in passing. Numbers of United States Regiments of soldiery, and all sorts of political and other societies are drafted into the city to take part, and the sight is a grand one. On the day that President Benjamin Harrison was installed it poured with rain the livelong

day. It was a veritable deluge. Nothing daunted, Miss Anderson took her place with friends at some point of vantage, where seats had been secured, and braved the elements for hours. She got wet through and took a severe cold, which in her state of health and nerves seemed to fly to her brain and render her work impossible. She played on Monday fairly comfortably; on Tuesday, with difficulty; on Wednesday, the theatre was closed; on Thursday, she made another attempt, but the more she tried to concentrate her powers the more they seemed to desert her. On Friday and Saturday no performance. Sunday we went on to Baltimore, hoping to play on Monday. It was impossible, and on Tuesday we left for New York, our season being ended and Miss Mary Anderson's brilliant professional career closed. She has never played since. Arrived in New York, the management made equitable terms with us for the balance of our contracts, and the whole thing was over. A curious circumstance was that I, too, was somewhat dangerously ill, and had Miss Anderson played every night it is doubtful if I could have done so, but I had no need to worry about it, as no performances took place. A serious case of malaria which I had contracted in Cincinnati laid me very low. I lost weight at an alarming rate, and with two or three days' growth of beard was almost unrecognisable at the railway station on the Sunday. But for the kind nursing and attention given me by a member of the company, Mr. Rudolph de Cordova, now an active worker on the London Press, I really do not know what might have befallen me. When I got to New York my doctor (an old Edinburgh friend) insisted that I must

remain under his care at least a month, and I promised to do so, but the s.s. *New York* was sailing on March 20, and knowing all the officers on board, I took my health in my own hands and sailed home, but I realised afterwards that I had been very unwise. That illness, uncured, hung in my system for a long time, and years afterwards asserted itself in an extremely well-defined and serious manner. I reached Liverpool March 28, 1889.

Shortly after this Miss Anderson married Mr. Navarro, of New York. She retired to a picturesque home at Broadway, near the country of the Shakespeare she loved so well, where she has lived, practically ever since, the life that some of us are old-fashioned enough to think the higher life for a woman—namely, that of loving wife and devoted mother. One occasionally sees her in London at the theatres, etc., looking the picture of health and happiness, and if possible handsomer in her maturity than when she was the “observed of all observers.” I can think of nothing more complimentary to write than that she is almost a counterpart of what her mother was when I first saw her. Some three or four years after her retirement I was passing through New York on my way home from the West and I supped at Delmonico’s with Abbey and Schoeffel, and they entrusted me with a commission—namely, if I could persuade her to come to America for a farewell engagement of thirty weeks they would give her £1,000 a week for her own services and they would make me a present of £1,000 the day that the contract was signed. On my arrival in London I saw Mrs. Griffin (her mother), who was disposed to think the offer ought to be accepted—

it was such a lot of money to earn—but on submitting it to her daughter she was quite obdurate in her refusal, and there the matter ended. The £1,000, added to what I had, would have enabled me to buy a little home at Teddington that I was much attached to, but it was not to be, and the place went to a luckier man.

In August, 1889, I was engaged to play Pierre Lorance in a revival of that fine play *Proof* at the Princess's Theatre. This is one of the best-acting dramas in existence, splendidly constructed and full of human nature; but, in my judgment, the version as played in England with the above title cannot compare with that used at the Union Square Theatre, New York, and called *The Celebrated Case*, which is a literal translation of the French name (*La Cause Célèbre*). The play did not have a good "send off" in England. One of the leading characters was unfortunately cast.

In the November of 1889 I had a unique experience. Brandon Thomas had written a play called *The Gold Craze*, also produced at the Princess's, and I was engaged for a part called the Baron de Fleurville. At this time there was a man well-known about the West End of London who styled himself a Marquis, who was the son of a Dublin carriage builder. What right he had to his title was always a matter of mystery. It was said he bought it of some Continental burgomaster. I did not know him personally; in fact, I had studiously avoided doing so, but nearly every mail brought me information from strangers about him, when the following incident became public.

Brandon Thomas knew him. I am unaware whether he had him in view when he wrote the play; but he

brought me his photo—as I was informed at the man's own request—and asked me to make up like him. This I refused to do, but I did adopt, and had specially made, an extremely *outré* characteristic style of hat he wore, which I thought would be effective in the part. Hearing, I suppose, that the part was that of a scoundrelly adventurer, and very much against the audience, he arranged an organised opposition on the first night, and, although I fear the play was not a good one intrinsically, he and his friends effectually killed any possibility it had, and it was a pronounced failure. I was taken by surprise, and I struggled through the dilemma as best I could. The management of the theatre, a curious coterie at the time (Kelly had retired), prosecuted him for conspiracy, and after eight hearings at Marlborough Street Police Court he was committed for trial at the Old Bailey. At the trial the prosecuting management, to keep up their eccentric character, did not put in an appearance when the case was called on, and, of course, it fell through. After it had been dismissed one of these gentlemen turned up, and appeared to be on terms of great friendship with the defendant, which was, to say the least of it, an unusual proceeding, from which my readers can draw any conclusion they choose. Although only a witness, I had found it necessary to employ a solicitor, who in turn engaged a barrister to hold a watching brief in my behalf, and I had nothing to do “but pay and look pleasant”; altogether I was very glad when this most unpleasant incident was closed.

In December, 1889, I was engaged by Robert Pateman to play, at the same theatre, the part of Jim Burleigh in a drama by G. R. Sims and Henry Pettitt called

*Master and Man*. It was a very strong, effective play, and Pateman himself gave one of his masterly performances of a rugged character part called Humpy Logan. Mrs. Pateman was also in the cast, as was Charles Dalton, who made therein his first appearance in London, and poor E. W. Gardiner (Miss Kate Rorke's first husband), whose very sad end was a genuine grief to their many friends. Charles Dalton is now a firmly established favourite on the American stage. *Master and Man* ran just three months. After some odd engagements of not much moment, on September 1, 1890, I joined Mr. and Mrs. Kendal for a tour of Great Britain and the United States which extended to thirty-three weeks. We played three weeks at home, and sailed for New York on September 24 on the s.s. *Germanic*. We opened at the Fifth Avenue Theatre in that city on October 13. I have previously referred to the art of our managers, so it only remains to say we had a really good company and a repertory of fine plays. We went practically all over the country east of the Rockies. The Press were loud in our praises everywhere and the business was splendid. In the company were Miss Bennett, Miss Florence Cowell, Miss Violet Vanbrugh (Mrs. Arthur Bouchier), Miss Campbell, J. E. Dodson, Joseph Carne, Seymour Hicks, Henry Nye Chart, A. M. Dennison, myself, and others. Among the plays were *The Ironmaster*, *The Scrap of Paper*, *The Squire*, *The Queen's Shilling*, and a beautiful play called *The Weaker Sex*, by Pinero. This play had not been the success it deserved in London. I could never think why. It was, perhaps, a little before its time. I believe it would be worth some manager's revival.



It is so human, dramatic, and finely written. There was only one discordant note in the tour. The business manager was a gentleman who had been an officer in an infantry regiment, and, whilst he was presumably loyal to his trust, he had no kind of sympathy with our calling, and was a positive adept at setting the company "by the ears" and putting us in a false light with our managers. He would, if allowed, treat the ladies and gentlemen like a lot of indifferent militia men at their annual training. This brought about many unpleasant incidents which might well have been avoided. When the time came for us to sail for home Mr. and Mrs. Kendal took passage on the s.s. *Teutonic*, with one or two of the company who chose to pay part of the passage money themselves, but the rest of us, whose contracts all called for "first-class" passages, were shipped by the military gentleman on the s.s. *City of Richmond*, which at that time was very much of a back number. The accommodation was meagre, the provisions poor; in short, a very "shoddy" journey in every way. Three days out from New York, in a very bad storm (logged by the captain "Strong gale from the south-east," "Hurricane force"), a fire was discovered in some bales of cotton in the hold. To any one who knows the habit of sea captains in making light of bad weather it will be patent that we were in the gravest peril indeed. The recent burning and loss of life in the case of the s.s. *Vulturno* brought vividly to my mind our experiences. It was almost a replica of our position, and our fate might easily have been the same but for our great good luck. The fire was discovered about two in the morning. My principal chum

in the company, who was also my room mate (A. M. Dennison), and I dressed hurriedly and sought the captain, who was directing operations. The cotton was well alight, and the flames were quite fierce and spreading. It was then discovered that the equipment of the s.s. *City of Richmond* was as out of date as the vessel herself. The fire hose would scarcely carry water, the leakage therefrom rendered the deck ankle-deep, and the only expedient was, perhaps, the best in case of burning cotton—namely, to throw volumes of steam into the bulkhead and hold where the fire was raging. All this time a hurricane was blowing, and it is the barest truth to say that there would not have been a possibility of getting a lifeboat on to the water within the succeeding twenty-four hours. I had often wondered in my youth and early manhood what sort of a man my big fearless father (described in my first pages) had for a son, and what kind of courage I would have in case of danger. Well, here was my opportunity for a test, and I may say I came through the ordeal to my own satisfaction. As we were dressing Dennison said to me, "What are you going to do, Jack?" I made the obvious reply, "What I am told to do," with which he acquiesced. After we had been shown the danger we asked the captain what he wished from us. He said, "Keep the women quiet and get some stuff into the lifeboats," and in a few minutes "Denny" and I, dressed in tarpaulins and sou'-westers, were handing provisions along the deck in the dark to the boats as if we had been used to it all our lives. I remember thinking once, and once only, that if the end was coming it was perhaps as well that way as any

other, and it was no good whining over it. It was pouring with rain when the morning broke over as angry a sea as could well be imagined, and as soon as any objects could be discerned a small freight steamer was seen some miles off. We signalled to her our condition, and she answered that "she would stand by us." She turned out to be the s.s. *Councillor* (I think that was the name), from New Orleans with cargo. It seemed a sort of comfort, especially to the ladies, to be within sight of other human beings, though it was not the least real good. As I have said, any attempt to launch a boat would have been futile and suicidal. And so we passed our first day, the fire gaining ground perceptibly. As the second day wore on towards three o'clock, the sea having moderated considerably, the Cunard s.s. *Servia* overhauled us, and in answer to our signals also agreed to stand by us, and did so. On the fourth day, as we came up from lunch, the smoke of another steamer was seen away to the north-east, steaming west, and our course was altered to meet her, and she was signalled. As was expected, she turned out to be the s.s. *City of New York*, of our own line. Then occurred a rather novel and impressive sight. The sea by this time was comparatively smooth, and these three monster vessels drew up near to each other in mid-ocean, whilst boats were lowered and the captains went from one to the other consulting as to the best course of action. As the *City of New York* was carrying a large consignment of mails it was decided that it would be better for her to proceed on her journey, and the *Servia* undertook to see us to the Fastnet Lighthouse, on the south coast of Ireland. By this time we had

become quite accustomed to the presence of the fire, which was being kept in check by the steam; and when we got to Queenstown, where, of course, many passengers went ashore, the captain having said it would do him a little good with his proprietors to take as many of his passengers as possible to Liverpool, Dennison and I at once expressed our determination to go all the way with him—the least we felt we could do for as brave a little hero as ever lived. His name was Redford.

When we arrived at Liverpool the sides of the ship, in the sections where the fire was, were thickly encrusted with charred salt from the action of the sea water dashing against the hot metal of her plates, and I was told that when she was docked and opened up to the air a dense volume of black smoke and dust rose to a great height, and part of her deck caved in completely. That the owners of the vessel held much the same opinion of her as her passengers was rather proved by the fact that she never sailed the Atlantic again. After some necessary repairs she was engaged in conveying pleasure parties for trips to the Norwegian Fjords, etc. In all this calamity there were elements of humour to those whose faculties were alive to them. Some considerable amusement was caused by a fellow-actor named Arthur Dacre, who was returning with his wife (Miss Amy Roselle) after an unfortunate season in the United States. Poor Dacre was a good chap but an ultra-sentimentalist. He ought to have been a Frenchman. Educated, and formerly practising as a doctor, he had, presumably, learnt the use of drugs, and he had acquired the habit pretty strongly. Such an experience as I have described was not to be missed by one of his

temperament. He appeared to be "having the time of his life." He spent the night of the discovery of the fire in a rather glaring suit of pyjamas. I don't think he dressed normally for hours. It was he who woke Dennison and myself from sleep with the fine melodramatic announcement, "Now, then; now you have need of all your courage!" "What is it, Arthur?" said we. And he answered, in tones which would have been an effective curtain to any act ever written, "Ah! ha! the ship's on fire!" Later on I saw him rush up to two young ladies sitting at the top of the companion-way, and behaving with perfectly stoical calmness, and say, "For God's sake, be calm!" One of them replied, "I don't know if you are aware of it, Mr. Dacre, but my sister and myself discovered this fire about an hour ago, and you must admit we are not distressing any one very much with our anxiety." When matters had settled down and all were more self-possessed he spent the rest of the voyage in reporting on the progress of the fire, and bemoaning the fate which, to his mind, had singled him out for special vindictiveness by following up his professional ill-luck with a voyage on a burning ship.

Another amusing thing, though not pleasant, was that we were bringing to England about 14,000 carcasses of beef in a refrigerator bulkhead. It so happened that this was situated near the fire, and the steam poured on to the latter melted the ice in the refrigerator and we came up the Irish Channel leaving an odour behind us which was appalling. One of the ship's carpenters who was engaged in remedying the ventilation was so nearly asphyxiated that he was laid on the deck quite unconscious for nearly an hour.

Poor Daere some years afterwards was found with his wife, both dead, in their room in Australia, where ill luck seemed to have pursued them, and there was evidence beside them that they had agreed to die together. They were both really nice people, and Miss Roselle was quite especially clever in her profession. Let us hope they found the rest and peace they sought with such desperate earnestness. And my great chum Dennison—a fine fellow, true as steel, and with the best characteristics of an English gentleman, sought oblivion, the following year, in the same dreadful way, during that terrible period of delirium and depression which appears to be always a part of convalescence from typhoid fever. I was frightfully cut up when the news reached me.

For further particulars of the *City of Richmond* fire, a very full and circumstantial account will be found in Seymour Hicks's book of his life. There is just this trifling difference between us that he was not there and I was. Verb. sap. ! It is all very amusing and interesting to look back on, but I shall always feel we ought not to have been there at all, and should not have been but for the martinet militarism of the gentleman who was entrusted with the conduct of Mr. Kendal's business. He was on the *Teutonic* himself !

## XXI

I ARRIVED home in London June 13, 1891.

On September 16, 1891, I set sail from Liverpool by the s.s. *Britannic* for New York, again, to fulfil one of the most delightful engagements of my career, with the Jefferson-Florence comedy company. At this time there was a vogue in America for the grouping of names such as the Booth-Barrett company, the Robson and Crane company, and the one I joined. I don't think it meant anything in our case. I believe the entire investment and profit were Jefferson's; but "Billy" Florence, having been a fairly successful star on his own account, got a good thumping salary to give up his own touring and throw in his lot with his older comrade. In addition to these two names there were others almost equally well known, and the company partook of the nature known as an all-star one. Amongst others, Mrs. John Drew, Miss Viola Allen, William E. Owen, George Denham, Mrs. Rouse, and the writer, possessed good credentials with the public, and all the smaller parts were in good hands. We only did two plays, *The Rivals* and *The Heir-at-Law*, in which I played Jack Absolute and Dick Dowlas. The tour opened in Richmond, Virginia, on October 5. In the larger cities we stayed in hotels in the usual way, but when on the road we travelled in our own car with two servants—a cook and waiter—

pulling up at the railway stations and going to the theatres for our performances, returning to our ear to supper and sleep, and hitching on to an available train bound for our next stopping place. The business was enormous and the performances were much praised everywhere. It will be quite unnecessary for me to attempt to extol the art of Joseph Jefferson. Three continents set the hall-mark on his work. His Rip van Winkle, Caleb Plummer, Dr. Pangloss, Bob Acres, Salem Seudder, Mr. Golightly, etc., were world-famous; and justly so. Perhaps his Bob Acres was not quite the character that Sheridan intended him to be. He was a more gentlemanly Bob Acres than is usually seen, but it was a most polished performance, and he made it very difficult for Jack Absolute to hold his accustomed place in the play. Jefferson was a perfectly delightful personality—gentle and kindly to all. Few men in one's experience would have stood as severe a test as Jefferson did. At twenty-six years of age he was told he had one lung only, but he didn't whine about it. He left America for Australia in 1861 in the search of health, and, happily, found it, as well as fame; came home by way of England in 1865, where he consolidated his reputation; and at the time I write of, when he was well over sixty, he was not only the most noted actor in the United States, but also one of the most worthy and beloved gentlemen. He had trained his mind to amusements that his health could compass; he was a beautiful painter, a reader of books, and his summers were spent fishing at his home at Buzzard's Bay or on his Canadian river reservation. He had great force of character and a firm, strong will. Altogether a thoroughly fine man!



Billy Florence was not the equal of Jefferson as an actor, though quite a good one, but was a genial, good-natured comrade, who was popular wherever he went. Unhappily we did not enjoy his cheery companionship long. He was taken ill with what appeared to be a very bad cold in Philadelphia. He braved it and played up to Saturday, but on Sunday pneumonia set in, and he became rapidly worse. Jefferson and I called to see him at the Continental Hotel in the evening before leaving for Buffalo, and I was shocked at his condition, though Jefferson (always optimistic) did not seem to think his case as serious as I did. We got wires two or three times a day, all of graver and graver import, and on the Thursday the poor fellow passed away, to the great sorrow of all of us and a legion of other friends.

Louis James, another well-known actor, and semi-star at the time, took his place.

Mrs. John Drew should have a chapter to herself if art and humour ever deserved it. She was a veritable tower of strength. It is a common theory amongst actors and even the public that the first performer you see of a great character always remains in your mind as the best. I need not say that I have seen many Mrs. Malaprops before her, including Mrs. Chippendale (at the Haymarket), our great Mrs. Stirling, and others, but Mrs. Drew will always stand out in my memory as by far the best, and it would not be hard to convince me that the character has never had a finer exponent. A born humorist, and brimming over with human nature, she was not only a great actress, but a wonderful companion and friend, and the chats over the supper-table on our car when we came in from the theatres are



MRS. JOHN DREW AS MRS. MALAPROP

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amongst my most treasured remembrances. A delightful little incident occurred at one of our rehearsals. Mrs. Drew asked Jefferson's permission to introduce a bit of stage business in one of her scenes which she had done before and which had proved effective. As stage director he requested her to show him what it was, and she proceeded to do so with infinite art and charm. When she had finished Jefferson said with great heartiness: "By all means do it, Mrs. Drew! I am sure Sheridan would have liked you to." When I was with Miss Neilson in 1874 at her own theatre in Philadelphia, her son, the present popular John Drew, then quite a young man, was playing Borachio in *Much Ado About Nothing* with us. In one scene he has to say, "I tell this tale vilely." The opportunity was too tempting to his mother. Sitting at the prompt table, she said in an undertone, "You do, my son, you do!"

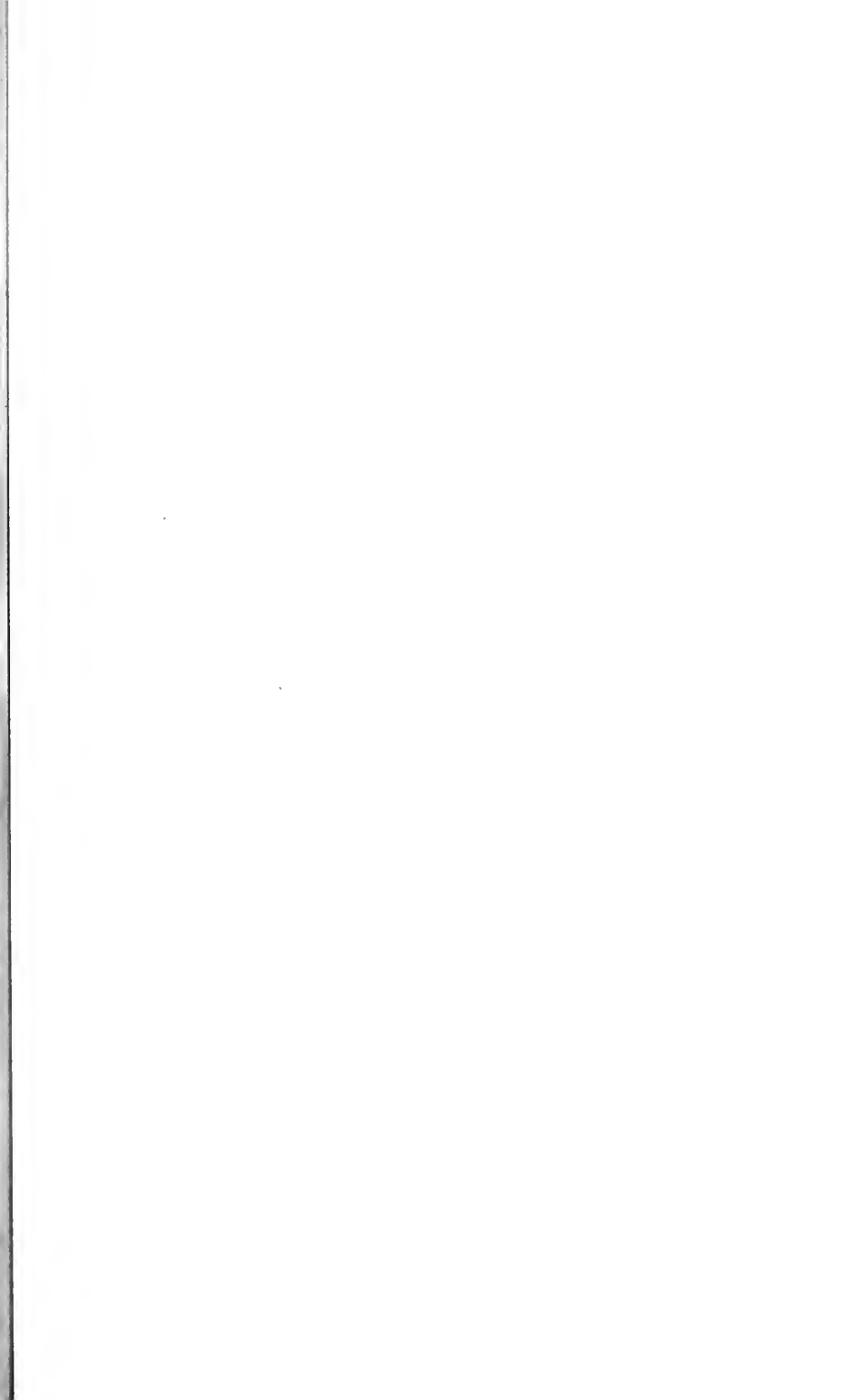
William E. Owen, our Sir Anthony Absolute and Lord Duberly, was an admirable actor—very much better than many with greater names. He had made a hit as Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night*, and his performances with us were good enough for anything. Miss Viola Allen, a delightful actress and charming young gentlewoman, has since become a successful American star. Joseph Warren was Jefferson's third son playing under that name, and a worthy son of his worthy father. Our business manager was Tom Jefferson (second son). He was full of fun and humour. Altogether, we were like a united happy family party.

Tom raised a great laugh at supper one night. It was at Fort Worth, Texas, which, at that time, was known to harbour many desperate law-breakers. We

had played to an enormous house and presumably had a considerable sum of money on the ear. The conversation turned on the chances of our being robbed as we were standing outside the railway station. After several remarks had passed of more or less fun or anxiety, our business manager said : " Well, if any one *holds me up* he'll get into debt."

We went literally over all the United States, travelling 27,000 miles, and we finished in Denver, Colorado, March 26, 1892. I came through to New York, March 30, and sailed for home on the s.s. *City of Paris*, April 6, arriving in London April 14, 1892. It is a great pleasure to me to think I have remained on terms of intimate friendship with all Jefferson's sons until to-day, and we are the best of chums wherever we meet.

One incident well worth recording occurred about this time. Pinero and I had always been good friends, and more than once he had told me that he had in his mind a part which he thought would work out strongly for me when he had perfected the story. Anxious not to miss such a promising chance (when I was going to America to join Jefferson), I called on him at his house in Hamilton Terrace to say " Good-bye " and incidentally to let him know where I could be found. In the course of a pleasant chat he said : " I have just come back from the country, where I have finished a play I had to write. I could not get on with anything else until it was out of the way. We are going to do it for a *matinée* at the St. James's Theatre and I don't suppose it will ever be heard of again. At all events, it is quite impossible for it to draw money." That play was *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*.





*Photo]*

EDWIN BOOTH

*[London Stereoscopic Co.*

*[To face page 193*

During these last-mentioned engagements I saw a great deal of Edwin Booth when I was in New York. What a sweet, gentle, kindly nature his was ! I used to have long chats with him in his room at the Players' Club, which were most enjoyable. He had almost as great an admiration for Phelps as I had, and never wearied of talking of him ; so we were on common and sympathetic ground. Edwin Booth was another artist and gentleman whom it was a privilege as well as a great pleasure to number amongst one's friends. He went to his long rest in that same room, June 8, 1893.

When I got home from the Jefferson tour I took a good holiday until December, when I appeared as Captain Amber in a one-act play by Justin McCarthy at the Palace Theatre in London. This was founded on an incident in the Indian Mutiny and was called *The Round Tower*.

It was a vividly dramatic episode, and was, I suppose, almost the first of the now popular play-sketches attempted in a music hall. I think that it was well played, but it was perhaps a little before its time as an experiment, and was only moderately successful, running but five weeks.

In the early part of 1893 I made my first serious attempt at journalism with an article descriptive of my tour of the West, which appeared in the London *Topical Times*. I had previously scribbled some odd poems, etc., and it was pleasantly encouraging to find my work accepted, paid for, and kindly received. Amongst other scraps were "The Mission of Judas," "The Far West," and "The Sun-Kissed Land," the last two written in California and first published there.



They were impressions of the country I travelled through. The former appeared in the New York *Herald* and the *Anglo-American Times*, a paper started in London by the Hon. Francis Lawley, who afterwards proved my very good literary sponsor and friend, and helped me not a little in finding an opening for my early efforts at writing, for which, he was good enough to say, he considered I had an aptitude.

On April 8, 1893, I left Southampton by the s.s. *New York*, and arrived in New York on April 15, to take part in the first production in America of the Drury Lane drama, *The Prodigal Daughter*, by Henry Pettitt and Sir Augustus Harris. With this play the American Theatre, at the corner of 42nd Street and 8th Avenue, was opened on May 22, 1893, and it ran there right away through the summer without intermission up to December 16 to very fine business, except in the very hottest weather. It was quite an exceptional cast that was engaged for this drama by Mr. T. Henry French, including Leonard Boyne, Julius Knight, Charles Dalton, Sidney Howard, Jefferson d'Angelis, the writer, W. Winchell Smith, Miss Julia Arthur, Miss Charlotte Tittell, Miss Helen Dauvray, and others. After a time Miss Arthur and Miss Tittell left the company, and they were succeeded by Miss Adelaide Prince and Miss Maxine Elliott. Many of these names are well and favourably known on both sides of the Atlantic, and all did good work in the play in question. But, oh ! the heat at times ! I remember one awful Saturday when we played twice, and when (to quote the American papers) "General Humidity was out with all his forces." I used four shirts and ten collars in the course of the

day's work, and, even then, was hardly well-groomed. But this summer demonstrated to me a fact which I had often heard New Yorkers boast of, viz. that their city is the best seaside place in the world. It is quite wonderful what an innumerable lot of pleasant resorts you can get to, from there, for a trifling fare such as 25 cents (1s.) or 50 cents (2s.). I cultivated the habit of getting up early every Sunday morning—no matter how tired I was—and journeying to some different pleasant place, where I remained until Monday afternoon. Thus I explored any number of delightful spots on Long Island, the New Jersey coast and Long Island Sound, and got health and change at the same time. Before leaving London I had settled with Mr. Frank Lawley, at his request, to write a series of articles on New York current events for his paper, the *Anglo-American Times*, and he was most encouraging in his opinion of my work, which appeared regularly, and when unfortunately the paper died for lack of support, he passed my work on to another London journal, by which it was accepted and utilised for some time. One great feature of our play was a stage reproduction of the race for the Liverpool Grand National, with a good-sized water jump, over which the horses used to leap in full view of the audience, and a number of coaches, etc., crowded with visitors, watching the sport. It became a perfect craze with the best people in the city to form a part of this crowd, and our super-master made a very large addition to his income by the tips he got from many of New York's biggest swells for the privilege of appearing in the scene. Indeed, so much a mania was it that I could not resist the temptation of scribbling a few verses

which I called "The Society Supe," and which, appearing in the *Rider and Driver* (a New York weekly), caused some little amusement. This I followed with another scrap entitled, "The Paradox of Sport," and the *New York Herald* published "The Far West" and "The Broken Melody."

During the summer of this year (1893) I saw a great deal of horse-racing round New York, and in the autumn my friend Frank Lawley wrote me that if I cared to submit a short, comprehensive résumé of the American racing season, he thought he could find a market for it in England. This I did, and, to my great satisfaction, it was published in the December number of *Baily's Magazine* of that year. For my first real sporting article to find its way into a publication of the class of *Baily's* was, I considered, a great feather in my cap, and it was additionally pleasant to find the American papers, when it reached New York, speaking of my contribution in terms of praise, not only as able and correct, but as a particularly fair and unisular summary of the season's sport. Even so distinguished a sporting writer and authority as Francis Trevelyan (an Englishman settled in New York) went out of his way to be most complimentary. And here I should like to say a few words of the great interest that I have always taken in racing ever since I was grown up. Comic and fabulous stories have reached me from time to time of my winnings and losings, and how I have sacrificed my professional career to my hobby. Let me be perfectly frank. I am of a methodical turn of mind, and I have kept a fairly accurate account of the cost of my favourite amusement. In forty-five years or so, racing has cost me a little less than

£2,000, *i. e.* less than £50 a year. I have done little or nothing at it for years now, but I could have spent as much in the same time on bicycling, and much more on golf. When I put against this account the out-of-door healthy excitement and the thoroughly good times I have had, I cannot honestly say that I regret a shilling of the money, though of course the amount in question is always handy, especially as one advances in life. The old lady who was discovered kissing her cow explained the unusual proceeding by saying, "There is no accounting for taste," and, although I have lost no jot of my enthusiasm for a well-played good play, I must frankly admit that I would rather have seen Ormonde, Minting, and Bendigo fight out the Hardwicke Stakes at Ascot (as I did) than most of the murderous assaults on a great man's work which in recent years have been called Shakespearean revivals, and I would much prefer to have witnessed the battle royal between Le Blizon and Sundridge at Hurst Park than a whole year's aggregation of morbid, sordid problem plays such as are advocated by some people nowadays, and which are merely nauseating to healthy-minded men and women, young and old, and keep them away from the theatre.

Amongst prominent racing people that I have known fairly intimately are : Owners—Robert Peck, Captain Machell, Mr. Redfern, Lord Lonsdale, Arthur Cooper, and C. E. Howard. Trainers—C. Jousiffe, Joseph Cannon, Charles Morton. Jockeys—Archer, T. Cannon, "Morny" Cannon, Fred Webb, C. Wood, S. Loates, Tod Sloan; and members of the Ring—Charles Head, W. D. Foster, George Silke, R. H. Fry; and, in America, J. R. Keene, Foxhall Keene, Richard Croker, "Lucky"

Baldwin, W. Easton, Charles Reed, James Rowe, W. Lakeland, James McLaughlin, Fred Taral, Francis Trevelyan, and many others. From one and all I have received marks of friendship, and have spent many happy hours with them. My carefully considered opinion is that many racing men in all branches of the sport compare favourably with any other class that I have ever been brought in contact with. Before leaving this subject, it may be of interest to some readers to mention an incident which occurred during my stay in New York—namely, the dramatic sale of St. Blaise. To many of those who were at all “behind the scenes” this horse was regarded as one of the luckiest winners of the English Derby (1883). For some reason, which I have forgotten, he was sent out to New York to be sold when he was thirteen years old. Speculation was rife for weeks as to what price he would bring, and many prominent owners and breeders were mentioned as determined to secure him. The sale took place at Tattersall’s of New York, one evening after dinner, and round the sale ring were gathered many of the prominent sportsmen of the country, in evening dress and otherwise, with quite a number of ladies of the “Four Hundred” of the city. W. Easton (“Billy”), the best horse auctioneer I ever saw, courteous and well bred, mounted the rostrum, and after the usual remarks and giving the animal’s pedigree, he said, “What price shall I say for St. Blaise?” “Like a bolt from the blue” came the voice of Charles Reed, the famous Kentucky breeder, “One hundred thousand dollars!” (£20,000). There was no higher bid, and St. Blaise had become the property of a new owner in less than two minutes! The price

seemed a large one for a horse of his age, who might be considered to have seen some of his best days, but Reed's judgment soon received ample endorsement. St. Blaise sired many notable winners, and many of his progeny took high rank amongst the best-class racehorses of the United States.

Harking back to *The Prodigal Daughter*, after the great success in New York we naturally looked forward to a very successful tour through the country—but, strange to say, though the business was good, it was not enormous, nor indeed as good as was expected. We started in Harlem, followed by Brooklyn; and then we were met with a “facer” by the burning of the Globe, Boston, where we were due for the third week, which caused us a three weeks’ lay off. The Globe, Boston, was managed by a gentleman named John B. Stetson, quite one of the “characters” of that day. Mr. Stetson had made a great deal of money as the proprietor of many pawnshops. How and why he entered the theatrical arena I know not, but he loomed up quite large in dramatic matters, and had several theatres as well as companies under his control. Some of Gilbert and Sullivan’s operas were first produced in America by him. He had not had many of the advantages of education, and some of his lapses were worthy of Mrs. Malaprop herself. Once after a sea voyage, when he had suffered a great deal, on setting foot on the New York landing-stage he said, “Ah! thank God! once more on terra cotta!” But perhaps his finest effort was at Booth’s Theatre (then under his management). A Passion Play was being rehearsed, and he sailed down the parquette (the equivalent of our stalls) and said

## 200 FORTY YEARS ON THE STAGE

to the stage manager, "Who are them fellows on the stage now?" Reply: "Those, Mr. Stetson, are the Twelve Apostles!" John B. S.: "The d——! What's the good of twelve on a stage this size? Have fifty."

When our tour recommenced we went pretty nearly everywhere, finishing up at Boston on April 28, 1894, and I sailed for home on the s.s. *New York* on May 9, and arrived at Southampton on May 16.

During the tour I wrote for Miss Kate Field's *Washington*, at her suggestion, an article on Samuel Phelps, which was pretty extensively quoted in the *Boston Transcript* and several papers elsewhere.

## XXII

WHEN I got home I intended taking a long rest, but almost as soon as I landed I received a cable from Joseph Brooks, one of my old managers, offering me terms I could not afford to refuse, for a summer season at McVickar's, Chicago; and after just seventeen days in England I left Southampton by the s.s. *Chester* on June 3, arrived in New York June 13, left for Chicago June 23, and after rehearsals, began the engagement on July 2, 1894, in a play by Francis Reinau, entitled, *An American Heiress*, which proved to be worthless. This was followed on July 26 by a comedy by the brilliant American dramatist Augustus Thomas, entitled, *New Blood*. Although Mr. Thomas had (and has since) written many admirable plays, this did not turn out one of his best. It would be well described as slightly "sketchy," and was only moderately successful. It failed badly when subsequently tried in New York. Both plays were splendidly cast and played. Looking back on the names of the company engaged they read almost like a list of stars. Many of them have since become so. Couldock, E. M. Holland, Wilton Lackaye, Maurie Barrymore, George Nash, J. F. Saville, J. H. Barnes, Orris Johnson, Roy Fairchild, Ffolliott Paget, Anne O'Neill, Gladys Wallis, Lilian Lawrence, Jennie Eustace, and many others, constituted a company



formidable and forceful enough for anything. But the business was only fair, and the season ended on September 8. Several of my scraps of poems were published in the Chicago papers during my stay there. Arriving in New York, on my way home, on September 10, I was pounced on by Marcus Mayer, who insisted on engaging me for Augustin Daly to support Miss Olga Nethersole in her first appearance in the United States. This lady opened at Wallack's on October 15 in A. W. Gattie's play *The Transgressor*, which proved disappointing. On October 29 Miss Nethersole played Camille for the first time. She gave an admirable performance of this well-known part. Barrymore played Armand Duval excellently, and I was extraordinarily fortunate as Duval père. All the parts were in strong hands, and business improved materially. After New York we went to Philadelphia, where we played *Camille*, *The Transgressor*, and where Miss Nethersole played Juliet for the first time to the Romeo of Maurice Barrymore. In this production I played Friar Laurence. I am afraid that I had been spoiled by the performances of some former Juliets, and this one did not greatly impress me. From Philadelphia we went to Pittsburgh, where we played the same bills. By this time I was longing to get home, and as I was not particularly happy in the engagement, I gave in my resignation, and left the company on December 1, coming through to New York, and sailing for home on the s.s. *New York* on December 12, arriving on December 20 in time for Christmas. I am inclined to think that Miss Nethersole was then on the road to positive greatness. I had seen her play the Countess Zicka (*Diplomacy*) under the strong stage-

management of John Hare at the Garrick, and I consider her much the best performer of the part that I have seen up to this day, and her Camille was at first a splendid portrayal. I shall have occasion to refer to her and her art later on.

This engagement was the last time I played with Barrymore, whom I had known, as previously stated, under his own name of Blythe before, and at the time of his first appearance on the stage. He was quite an extraordinary character, a Bohemian of the most pronounced type. As a young man he won the lightweight, middle-weight, and heavy-weight boxing championship of England (Queensberry Rules) in three consecutive years. He became quite a good actor, wrote several capital plays, and had a ready wit of the first order. During our engagement in Philadelphia, one night at the Press Club a fellow-countryman of ours who had "looked on the wine when it was red" was boring and upsetting us by making silly and almost offensive comparisons between the two countries, to the annoyance of our kindly hosts. After having shown him more than once that we were not inclined to agree with him, he suddenly turned to "Barry" and said: "Why, hang it, Barry, they can't spell in this country, can they? They spell honour h-o-n-o-r, and labour l-a-b-o-r, don't they?" In a flash "Barry" replied, "Of course, old man, when they are talking about labour and honour they leave *you* out of the question." During one of his later visits to England he adapted a play from the French, which was accepted and produced by John Clayton at the old Court under the title of *Honour*. When the cast was being discussed Clayton said to him,

"My dear Barry, I should awfully like you to play the part of —, but you know, my dear fellow, with your American accent it is quite impossible." Barry thought for a moment and replied, "This is funny! When I am in America I am twitted with my English accent. Now I'm in England my American accent is considered an obstacle. Hang it all, I can't get my living reciting on the Atlantic." A play of his called *Nadjeska* only just missed being a great success at the Haymarket. His wife ("Georgie" Drew) played one of the principal parts. One of the quips therein provoked a roar of laughter on the first and every night. In a comedy scene Mrs. Barrymore said to a gentleman who was paying her marked attention, "Are your intentions honourable?" He replied, "Am I to understand that I have the choicc?"

*Nadjeska* was the play that "Barry" always claimed was the original of Sardou's *La Tosca*. A heated controversy took place in a Parisian newspaper (if my memory serves me, *Le Figaro*) between Sarah Bernhardt and him at the time of the production of the latter play as to the fact, and finally the great Sarah wrote denying all knowledge of Barrymore or his play. In a reply of biting sarcasm, such as he was master of, he stated that he handed his MS. to her at the supper-table of, and in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry E. Abbey. I know nothing of the merits of the case. I merely state what came out in the correspondence. Undoubtedly, though, there was a tremendous similarity in the story of the two plays. About this time I placed some plays for performance. I had previously brought a comedy called *Incog.* from the U.S., which was produced by





*Photo]*

*[Turner and Drinkwater*

J. H. BARNES AS MICHAEL DENNIS  
("Her Advocate")

*[To face page 205*

Charles Hawtrey under the title of *Tom, Dick, and Harry*. It did not make much money in London, but was a success for years in the provinces, and was the basis of the career and fortune of the present successful manager, Frank Curzon. Miss Rose Coghlan produced in New York a play called *Nemesis*, by the same authoress, Mrs. Romualdo Pacheco, by my advice. It was completely spoiled by insufficient rehearsal, and failed badly. Edward Terry accepted from me a comedy by Walter S. Craven, entitled *An Innocent Abroad*, which was successful, and remained in his repertory to the end of his life. Another play by Craven, called *A Cruel Law*, was secured by Henry Dana, and tried tentatively, with success, though not proceeded with for outside reasons. A farce-comedy by Barrymore, *Blood Will Tell*, was retained by option by W. S. Penley, and afterwards by Messrs. Greet and Engelbach, but never produced up to now. Finally, I was the means of bringing Mrs. Madeleine Lucette Ryley before the London public, through the medium of the comedy *Christopher, Junior*, which was secured by W. S. Penley, and afterwards transferred to Fred Kerr, who produced it at Terry's, under the title of *Jedbury, Junior*. Mrs. Ryley had very considerable success with subsequent plays, including *Mice and Men*, produced by Forbes Robertson.

After my return home I did nothing except a few odd weeks until September 26, 1895, when I appeared in a play called *Her Advocate*, by Walter Frith, at the Duke of York's. In this I had my first chance as an Irishman in London. It was only a small part, but a delightful one, named Michael Dennis, a briefless barrister, who described himself in the line "O'im the last o' the

Juniors and O'im sixty in May." I was most fortunate in pleasing the Press and the public and got some excellent notices, and even such a stickler for the brogue as Lord Donoughmore was loud in my praises on that score. The play, however, was not a great success, though many good artists were in it, including Misses Gertrude Kingston, Lena Ashwell, Henrietta Watson, Messrs. Charles Cartwright, C. W. Somerset, F. Volpé, A. Holmes-Gore, and others. In October, 1895, I went round the corner and joined E. S. Willard at the Garrick in a play by Jerome K. Jerome, entitled *The Rise of Dick Halward*, played by a very strong cast, including Willard, Marion Terry, H. V. Esmond, Annie Hughes, etc., but, unfortunately, not successful, and in *The Professor's Love Story*, by J. M. Barrie, revived in November, I played a full Scottish part, Henders. In both these plays I got splendid notices, and it was curious that I should have played an Irish and Scottish part in London within two months of each other. Apropos of this fact, my experience teaches me that the faculty for brogues and dialects is a thing to be grateful for and not egotistical about. I have played Irish parts in Dublin, Scottish parts in Edinburgh, and Yorkshire and Lancashire parts in the North of England, and all without any special application, and I have known artists of much greater standing than myself who could never simulate any kind of dialect at all. It seems to me that it is just the same as an ear for music. You have it or you haven't—and if you have, a short sojourn amongst people of a different district and the ear catches the fall of the vowels and consonants, and you find yourself speaking like those around you. In *The Pro-*



*Photo]*

J. H. BARNES AS HENDERS  
("Professor's Love Story")

*[Alfred Ellis*

*[To face page 206*





*essor's Love Story* appeared Willard, Annie Hughes, Fred Tyler, Mrs. Cannings, and others. A curious fact in connection with this play is that the three Scottish parts which cause so much amusement—viz. Pete, Henders, and Effie—are so far away from the main story that with the alteration of one line they could be taken out bodily without affecting the dramatic interest of the play. A very Scottish custodian of a library near the theatre offered to make a wager not only that I was a Scot, but that he could tell the part of Scotland I came from, and he named Arbroath. This engagement carried me up to March 7, 1896, and I was cast in the play which followed—the comedy by Henry Arthur Jones, *The Rogue's Comedy*—but the part was one I felt my personality entirely unsuited to. Whilst I was hesitating I got an offer for something I much preferred, and Willard generously released me from my contract. The offer in question was to play in that delightful comedy, *Rosemary*, by L. N. Parker and Murray Carson, produced at the Criterion, May 16, 1896, which made a pronounced hit, and was declared one of the most charming plays seen in London for many years. The cast was a comparatively small one, and practically every one of us scored a success, but what was not generally known then, and is perhaps stated here for the first time, is that four of those parts were played by artists not originally chosen for their portrayal. Thus, my old friend, Alfred Bishop, rehearsed Professor Jogram and gave it up, finding a difficulty in reconciling the two different characteristics of the part. Then it fell to me. Bishop then rehearsed the post-boy Minifie, and Edward Righton, Captain Cruikshank. Righton

was suffering from the acute asthma from which he never really recovered, which increased so distressingly that he was forced to retire from the cast, and Bishop took his place. James Welch was engaged for Minifie. A young lady whose name I have forgotten rehearsed Priscilla, but was found unsuitable, and Miss Annie Hughes stepped into her place. All four of these parts became good features of a notable success. Charles Wyndham (he was not Sir Charles in those days) played splendidly as Sir Jasper Thorndyke, an easy, graceful, humorous performance of the highest class. Perhaps in the last act, which is a monologue where Sir Jasper is supposed to be a nonagenarian, he was not quite so effective, but that was as much due to the authors as the artists. Many good judges considered that it would have been better if some of the other characters had lived to keep Sir Jasper company, and I rather agree with them. Indeed, I have been told that if the play is ever revived that will be found to have been done. I have no means of knowing if this information is correct. Miss Mary Moore has rarely played more daintily or sweetly than as Dorothy Cruikshank. Kenneth Douglas was quite admirable as William Westwood, the impulsive and perky young lover; and there was only one word for Miss Carlotta Addison as Mrs. Cruikshank—she was perfect. Altogether it was a signally happy stage event. The play ran till July 25, was suspended for the hot weather, was revived on October 6, and ran until Boxing Night, December 26; run again, suspended for Christmas holidays, revived February 13, 1897, and went on until March 20. It also made a great success in New York. One amusing incident occurred to me. At that

time I had a very dear friend, manager of a branch bank. He was a good theatre-goer, a great wit, and a loyal and amusing companion. He was also a great Phelpsite, having seen nearly all the grand old man's performances for years. About the time *Rosemary* was nearing the end of its run he came to see it, and we supped together afterwards. Beyond a general appreciation of the play and the acting, he did not say much, and I did not seek his opinion, knowing that I should be sure to get it in his own humorous way. Whilst smoking a cigar later on he suddenly roused himself and said: "Jack! I shouldn't have thought one actor could recollect as much of another as you do of the old man." And so it was. Professor Jogram, in one scene, was as near as I could make it a reproduction of one of my old patron's great performances, and my friend was the only one of all London to "spot" it. I suppose some men might have been annoyed. I was delighted. I have always held the theory that the great traditions of our difficult art are always worth considering, as much as the works of the Old Masters are considered a fitting study, and an almost indispensable part of, the education of a would-be painter.

## XXIII

DURING the summer break in the run of *Rosemary* (September 1896), I was engaged to star conjointly with Miss Bella Pateman for two weeks at the Elephant and Castle, in *Proof*. We did capital business, and apparently pleased our audiences immensely, but it was rather disheartening on more than one occasion to find ourselves playing second to a "harmless necessary cat." It appeared the theatre was over-run with rats, and this cat was kept with a view to their repression or extermination. Twice during our engagement, as a relaxation from his own profession, he chose to take a hand in ours. He advanced from the first entrance, walked deliberately to the middle of the stage, at the footlights, and there sat down and proceeded to wash his face in the approved manner of his tribe. Of course, no theatrical art could stand such opposition as this, and we played a distinct "second fiddle."

Just before I joined the stage there were several animal dramas extant. Dramas to exploit performing lions, bears, and dogs, such as *The Dog of Montargis*, *The Forest of Bondy*, etc. I suggested to the manager of the theatre (Mr. D'Estarre) that he should have a play written for and round this particular cat, who had already solved one important phase of our art, viz. perfect self-possession. Maurice Barrymore once de-

scribed a certain American artist as an actor "who believed in God and the centre of the stage." If my suggestion had been followed I fear the Elephant and Castle cat would have been known as a very "selfish star." At the Christmas break in *Rosemary* we revived at the Criterion the comedy *Betsy*, which had first been produced at that theatre, with a strong cast, including Alfred Bishop, James Welch, Aubrey Boucicault, Kenneth Douglas, Miss Annie Hughes, Miss Carlotta Addison, Miss Sybil Carlisle and others. It is a screaming farcical comedy, which went with a roar of laughter from end to end and played to good business. I played another Irishman, Captain McManus. I remember in connection with this production we were terribly upset one night by two disorderly men and two ill-behaved ladies in a private box, who were talking at the top of their voices and making such a noise that it was almost impossible for us to play our scenes, and the audience expressed annoyance more than once. During the second act the ladies of the company became quite disconcerted, and there was no alternative but to try to stop it. Advancing to the box I markedly addressed one of the gentlemen thus: "Excuse me, sir, but I think at the present moment the audience would rather hear me than you." There was a big round of applause from the audience, and the nuisance ceased. At the end of the act the principal offender and his friends felt it convenient to leave the theatre, and, as John Coleman once said, under similar circumstances, "we thought ourselves well rid of a knave."

The year 1896, though successful and pleasant, professionally, was, perhaps, the saddest in all my manhood.

Through circumstances of almost unparalleled treachery, I suffered a terrible domestic affliction. With my old world view of life and its responsibilities, it might have completely overwhelmed me, but that my trouble showed me the number of good friends I had, who, by their consideration and sympathy, helped me to bear and finally recover from the blow that I had suffered. It is true that this very grief brought in its train a great deal of compensating happiness, but it also left in its wake one deep scar, which will probably outlive me, and that, in the case of those dear to us, is a tragedy more dread even than losing them. But iron is hardened and toughened by blows; and the care of the afflicted, like that of children, can become so humanising as to amount to a tender charge, which we bear with fortitude if we have got the right sort of grit in our natures.

After two or three odd engagements, in the early summer of 1897 I was retained by Mr. Beerbohm Tree for a play which was abandoned after two or three rehearsals, and, in place of it, I played Taffy in *Trilby* and Allan Villiers in *The Red Lamp*, in revivals of those plays at Her Majesty's. I need not dwell on the manager's great performances of Svengali and Demetrius. They have been fully recognised by the Press and the public, and they were amongst those artistic triumphs which helped him to the very front rank of character actors. Amongst the strong company at Her Majesty's were Mrs. (now Lady) Tree; that popular comedian, Lionel Brough; the present successful manager and actor Gerald du Maurier (son of the brilliant *Punch* draughtsman, who also wrote the story of *Trilby*.) These were Gerald's early appearances, and he, even

then, showed very clearly the qualities which have since placed him in the van of living actors. Also Charles Brookfield was in the cast, and as well Miss Rosina Filippi, Miss Dorothea Baird (Mrs. H. B. Irving), and Lewis Waller. It will be remembered that this was the Diamond Jubilee year, and one very great event occurred when Mr. Tree invited all the Colonial Premiers then visiting England to the theatre and afterwards to a reception and *recherché* supper on the stage. A very notable and brilliant gathering.

After that, July 17, 1897, I played for four weeks in a comedy at the Criterion, *Four Little Girls*, by Walter S. Craven. I was responsible for the production of this play. It appeared to greatly please the audiences who saw it, but the weather was dreadfully hot, and from that or other causes it was not attractive enough to be kept in the bill. One recollection of this play is still vivid in my mind. It was the last appearance of that extraordinarily funny actor William Blakeley. Probably very few comedians have ever pleased or got more laughter from a public than this genial and eccentric old friend. He was irresistible. Lines that appeared quite ordinary, not to say worthless, he would get "screams" for, and if he had a good scene to play he could easily hold his own with any kind of comedian who might be pitted against him. The stories told of him are amongst the most amusing of the modern stage, but most of them depend absolutely on his own mannerisms, and would appear quite pointless in cold print. Within a few weeks of writing these lines a gentleman in America, in talking of the early visits to that country of Charles Wyndham and the



elder Sothern, said to me : " Yes ; but who was that wonderfully funny old gentleman they had with them ? " This was William Blakeley. His remark on his first visit to New York has become a classic. Jolting in a carriage, over a very badly-paved street on his way from the dock to his hotel, he got exasperated, and said : " Oh, hang it ! I knew I shouldn't like the beastly country before I started." Once, seated behind a gentleman at the club, who was playing poker (Blakeley only knew the game of Napoleon), he blurted out : " Three aces and two kings ! By gad ! I should go *Nap* ! " The discomfiture of the holder of the hand, who was a keen player, may be imagined by those who play cards and know the games in question. On the occasion of his last appearance he had great difficulty in remembering his words. I was playing the opposite part and, with the affection I had for him, I had covered up his discrepancies from the audience by speaking much of his part as well as my own, when, in the third act, to my utter dismay, he suddenly exclaimed : " As I was going to say when you interrupted me," etc. Poor old " Bill." It was his last effort ; and very soon after the curtain fell finally on as funny an actor as ever lived. We all mourned the loss of a genial old friend, and the public that of one of their primest mirth-provokers. We tried the play for a week in a suburban theatre, but it did not succeed.

The autumn of 1897 was one of great interest and importance to me. I played Polonius for the first time in my life in support of Forbes-Robertson, who then made his first appearance as Hamlet. The circumstance of my doing so was a little amusing. Forbes and I had

both been protégés of Mr. Phelps, and our careers had run on similar lines, though in different fields. I mean we had both been leading men for many years, and, although I had begun to drift into character parts, I had not definitely taken up the line of business known as old men. With that kindly consideration for others denoting the true gentleman, which has been one of his distinguishing characteristics all his life, he hesitated about asking me to play Polonius to his Hamlet. I well remember he called at my house, and, with more than ordinary trepidation, broached the subject to me, telling me how much he would like me to accept the part, and begging me not to be angry, but to give the matter my calm consideration. To his astonishment I accepted at once quite gladly, with the one reservation that I should be allowed to play the part as I read it in the book. He replied that that was just what he wanted, and the matter was settled there and then. We opened on September 11, 1897. It would be quite superfluous for me to add anything to the encomiums which greeted his performance. From then until to-day his has remained *the* Hamlet of our time—graceful, feeling, pathetic, scholarly, lovable—no Hamlet of our time has read the lines as beautifully or brought out their meaning with such distinction and such distinctness. Hamlets have been seen who accentuated this or that point with greater emphasis or greater elaboration. Hamlets have been seen for whom it was claimed that they reached greater heights of tragedy. Every actor finds something to suit his temperament in some part of Hamlet, and every thinker amongst the public has his pet theories as to what

Shakespeare meant in the various scenes of the play, but the great heart of the paying public on both sides of the Atlantic for the last sixteen years has declared with no uncertain voice for the Hamlet of Johnston Forbes-Robertson. On this notable occasion, I am very proud to say I was not found wanting. For years and years I had seen Polonius played, as I thought, quite "out of shape." Tradition is a splendid thing on the stage, and I firmly believe in it, but when it does lead wrongly it leads very wrongly indeed. Numbers of parts have got "out of gear" through exigencies of cast at some time or other and various different causes, and perhaps no one part had suffered more in the past than Polonius. I have seen performances of it which made me shudder. I determined to blot everything out of my vision, and, as the elder Boucicault said (to which I have referred in my earlier notes), read what the author said. I found him the *acting* Lord Chamberlain of the court, a splendid father, with a keen eye for the main chance, and a never-failing solicitude for the welfare of his son and daughter; far too wise and prudent to make an enemy of the prince whom he firmly believes to be mad—or very nearly so—and, in short, ever ready, when meeting this prince, with what in modern slang is known as "spoof." On these lines I played him; I venture to assert he was as amusing as he had ever been without losing a particle of his dignity or his character. It is my pleasure that the Press were unanimous in my praise, and my friends, the public, showed me very unmistakably that I had pleased them. A compliment which I greatly appreciated came from that fine writer and Shakespearean student, Herman Meri-

vale. He had often spoken pleasantly of my work in poetic plays. Just after the production of *Hamlet*, I met him, coming out of the Garrick Club, and, grasping my hand heartily, he said: "My dear Jack Barnes, all I have to say about your Polonius is that no one dare play it the old way as long as you are alive." What could one desire more? I was very happy over the whole matter. The cast included Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Miss Granville, Miss Sydney Crowe, Messrs. Cooper Cliffe, Bernard Gould (Bernard Partridge of *Punch*), Graham Browne, Franklyn Dyall, Martin Harvey, Fisher White, James Hearn, Ian Robertson, and others. The play ran until December 18, 1897.

This December is deeply graven on the minds of many actors and others by the brutal murder of our fellow-artist William Terriss. "Breezy Bill," as his associates loved to call him, was done to death by a degenerate of the worst type, named Prince, and a thrill of horror ran through the entire community at the callous determination of the crime. No motive for it could be established, beyond the fact that the criminal had been a super in the theatre with Terriss, and whilst the latter was a great success in life his slayer was a hopeless failure. To me personally it was especially horrible. Will Terriss and I had been great "pals" since the year 1872, when we were almost boys together at Drury Lane, and, on more than one occasion of late rehearsals, etc., he had actually shared my bed. We had more than once talked of joining forces in the production of a play we both greatly believed in, but something always occurred to put an obstacle in the way. He was killed as he was entering the private door of

the Adelphi to prepare for his evening performance. No one would claim for Terriss that he was a great actor, but he filled a niche in London theatricals which was all his own, and which it is bare justice to say has had no such efficient occupant since his death. If anybody is found to quibble at this statement I would remind him of the sympathetic crowds that lined the three miles of streets when we followed him from his house in Chiswick to his last home in Brompton Cemetery. Doubtless the terrible tragedy of his death had created a special interest, but "Bill" Terriss was a huge public favourite, and his name a household word. In some parts, such as Squire Thornhill (*Olivia*) and Nemours (*Louis XI.*) he was positively splendid, whilst his Henry VIII., with Irving at the Lyceum, was very admirable, if falling a little short of greatness, but as the hero of the dramas at the Adelphi, such as Henry Kingsley (*Harbour Lights*), and indeed in the whole series of the plays done about then at that theatre, he was absolutely unapproachable, and up to now unapproached. To his other fascinating qualities he added a delightful impudence which was amazing. I remember being present at the Haymarket to witness a comedy called *The Crisis*. When the curtain went up on the first act Will was discovered standing by the fireplace with a needle and cotton calmly sewing a button on his waistcoat whilst taking part in the opening dialogue. Perfectly natural, perhaps, but, let us say, a little unusual!

A good story was extant at the time which ran thus: Frank Tyars and he were next-door neighbours at Chiswick, and Tyars had a saddle-horse for sale. One

day Terriss, at work in his garden, saw a man come to Tyars's door, accosted him, and learned that he had come to look at the horse with a view to purchase. Tyars was in London for the day. Terriss, without a moment's hesitation, took the man round to the livery stable where the animal stood, struck a bargain for its sale, took the money, gave the man possession, and, when he came up to the theatre (the Lyceum) in the evening, said : " Well, Frank, I've sold the horse and here's the money." All this without one word of authority from Tyars, who thought he might have got a little more, but was so thoroughly amused at the whole thing that he accepted the situation. But stories abounded of his amusing " cheek," and he left a very great void behind him when so brutally taken from us. His murderer, Prince, is, I believe, still living in comparative comfort at Broadmoor, " detained during his Majesty's pleasure." I am afraid he came of rather bad stock. It may be of some dramatic interest to chronicle the fact that his sister (they were from Dundee) was a well-known member of the half-world of London, who had been one of the celebrated " Big Six " of Alexander Henderson's first production of *Les Cloches de Corneville* at the Charing Cross Theatre—a galaxy of very fine women. She even developed dramatic aspirations, and a play, avowedly written by her, was given for a *matinée* at the old Gaiety. It had a run of one consecutive afternoon only. After this she was mixed up in a well-known actor's divorce case, and she was one of many mentioned in connection with a much-execrated European monarch who died a few years ago. Unrecognised by her married name she was found

by a doctor, dead, in a house in London recently—a faithful little dog and a half-empty bottle of brandy by her side—and without a human being near or within sound. Truly an ill-starred brother and sister!

In the beginning of 1898 I was engaged by Forbes-Robertson for his trip to Germany, and we left by the Queenborough and Flushing route on February 22, arriving in Berlin on February 23. We opened in *Hamlet* at Kroll's Opera House in the Thiergarten on March 3. The German Press were most liberal to us, especially to our star, and a very charming appreciation of him and our work generally came from Josef Kainz, the distinguished German actor, who was then playing in Berlin, who afterwards became an immense favourite in Vienna, and who died only a short time ago. In addition to *Hamlet* we played *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* (March 7) for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, in which she duplicated her great London success, but Forbes-Robertson found poor scope for his powers in the somewhat negative part of Aubrey Tanqueray. On March 14 we produced *Macbeth*. This was Robertson's first appearance in that part, and also Mrs. Campbell's first effort as Lady Macbeth. I played Macduff. The *personnel* of the company was very much the same as in London. The whole experiment was immensely interesting, although with our large expenses and the prices of seats prevalent in Germany I fear our manager did not make money, but the kudos of his success gave him any amount of admirable advertisement for his subsequent home tour. I must say Berlin itself palled on me pretty quickly. It is all so terribly correct and uniform that one almost pined for a little irregu-

larity, and most certainly the ever-present militarism got on my nerves to the extent of boredom after awhile. Wherever you turned nothing but soldiers with their ostentatious salute of passing officers; all the statues in the streets, most of the pictures in the museums apparently designed to foster the fighting spirit. And the crowds of students everywhere on the Sunday afternoons, the majority of their faces slit and cut about by duelling swords all pointing in the same direction. A brilliant military officer whom I sat next to at a luncheon given to Forbes-Robertson at the Berliner Club (whose name must necessarily be withheld) explained this to me in perfect English thus: "You saw, Mr. Barnes, when you came to Berlin that we have little or no frontier. We have made our country by force of arms, and we have to keep it by the same power. Rightly or wrongly, we are prepared to fight an enemy on either or both sides, and every man will be at his post and every pound of provisions to feed him in twenty-four hours." This point is brought forcibly under your notice by all the rolling stock of all the railways bearing the Government mark of its capacity for carrying men, horses, and provisions in time of war. This officer's remarks give me the cue for recording my opinion that Prussia (proper) is not only a flat, grey country, but that I also found the Prussians a flat, dull people as a whole. As one journeys south in Germany and gets among the mountains and the sunshine the whole character of the population appears to change. I wonder if my readers will agree with the statement which I make from my own observation, that nearly all art, music, and charm in life



appear to follow the sun and thrive more satisfactorily among bright and picturesque surroundings.

Probably the outstanding impression remaining in my mind of my visit to Berlin is that of the Emperor. At the time of which I am writing he was even more in the public eye than he is to-day. All Europe was regarding him with the keenest interest as well as anxiety, and opinions were very varied as to his intentions and his characteristics. Most assuredly one had to go to Berlin to realise his tremendous hold on the affection and admiration of his people, and the reason of it. It would be quite impossible to overstate his indefatigability. He was surely the hardest working man in the whole of his dominions. Morning, noon, and night, whatever affected the welfare of the citizens, found him taking a personal interest in it. After his usual ride up the Unter den Linden in the morning you were liable to meet the Royal carriage half a dozen times a day driving hither and thither with its Imperial occupant inspecting for himself everything of public consequence. A small evidence of his systematic self-discipline was connected with us. He came to see Forbes-Robertson play *Hamlet*, and sent for him to offer him his gracious congratulations, but it put him a little "out of his stride." It drove his plain supper off to a later hour than he liked before retiring. He came again to see us play *Macbeth*, and this time an extra carriage in the retinue carried a chef and small cooking apparatus, and his modest supper was served in the retiring room at the back of his box after the third act, so that he would not pay us the bad compliment of leaving before the end of the play, but was then

able to retire immediately he reached the castle. A small matter to record, perhaps, but all part of a big man's earnestness.

From Berlin we went to Hanover (March 16), a dear old-world city with its picturesque home of the ancient Royal family and a perfectly magnificent Opera House, where we played. From Hanover to Hamburg (March 23), with its busy river full of shipping and bustling industry everywhere, and its beautiful ornamental water (the Alster Basin) in the middle of the city; and from there to Amsterdam (March 28), which, to me, was much the most charming of the four places we visited. Everything was so different to all one's experiences. To see the groceries delivered and the dust refuse collected by boat; the old Dutch buildings overlooking the canals, as well as the character of the people—all was picturesque, novel, and delightful. Of course we went to the Island of Marken, in the Zuyder Zee, where Henry Labouchere (previously mentioned) was born, and where the natives continue to wear their last century costumes for business purposes and sell you souvenirs and tokens, manufactured (I shrewdly suspect) in Birmingham. I have always remembered Amsterdam with the keenest pleasure, and one of its greatest delights was a Rembrandt picture in the public gallery, supposed to be the artist's finest example, "The Night Watch." No work of art has ever fascinated me quite so much as this. I found myself gazing on it at least five out of the seven days I was there. We played the same three plays in all the cities we visited. In Amsterdam a most gratifying notice appeared in one of the newspapers, coupling my name with that of our star

at all points, and expressing the hope that "Messrs. Forbes-Robertson and Barnes would soon pay a return visit to show the citizens what the English Shakespeare meant by Hamlet and Polonius." We left Amsterdam on April 3, and returned to London, as before, via Queenborough and Flushing.

## XXIV

BACK in England, we commenced a tour of the provincial towns, beginning at the Grand, Islington, where we played *Hamlet* all the week. On the Saturday a New York manager of my acquaintance, visiting London, went with me to the theatre and made Robertson a very fine offer to visit the United States with *Hamlet* in the autumn of the year. The financial proposition was most tempting and even extraordinary, but certain outside conditions were unacceptable, and America had to wait some years before seeing this fine performance. We visited Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. The Press was most laudatory about *Hamlet*, but not so enthusiastic about *Macbeth*. Business was fine everywhere. During our week in Edinburgh (May 14), a luncheon was tendered to Mr. Robertson and Mrs. Patrick Campbell by the well-known artistic club, The Pen and Pencil, to which I was invited, and after the principal guests had been toasted the hon. secretary, Mr. W. W. Macfarlane, proposed my health in glowing terms, alluding most feelingly to my old association with the city. It was received with the greatest favour, and I had a big lump in my throat and a strongly palpitating heart as I rose to respond. During this tour some of my poems appeared in the *Manchester Chronicle* ; and the *Admiralty*

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and *Horse Guards' Gazette*, of London, reprinted a whole series of them in July, August and September of the same year, 1898, and a new one entitled, "Belief—a Parallel," May 18, 1899.

On September 1, I re-appeared in London at Her Majesty's in a play by L. N. Parker and Murray Carson, called *The Termagant*. I am afraid it was not quite a good play, but unfortunate dissensions arose at rehearsals between the authors and the star, Miss Olga Nethersole, causing certain changes in the cast, etc., and it failed to "catch on," finishing its short career on October 7. *Hamlet* was revived by Forbes-Robertson at the Lyceum on November 7, for three weeks. Business for the revival was not great. On December 6 I played in a broadly farcical comedy at Terry's entitled *The Brixton Burglary*, with a good cast, including James Welch, Holmes-Gore, F. Gottschalk, Frank Curzon, Maud Hobson, and Annie Hughes. It was well noticed, but business was only moderate, and the run finished January 21, 1899. The play afterwards made much money in the provinces and America.

In February, 1899, I was engaged for a very interesting experiment. The New Century Theatre Society produced at the Haymarket, for four *matinées*, February 7, 9, 10, 13, a play by H. V. Esmond, entitled *Grierson's Way*. It dealt with a somewhat gruesome subject, but was a very fine piece of work. And in these days of ultra-realism I can never understand why it has not been revived. I feel sure it would be successful, although it will have been gathered from my oft-expressed opinion it is not a class of play I am, personally, in sympathy with. At the Haymarket it had the

advantage of an excellent company—the author himself, G. S. Titheradge, Fred Terry, myself, Miss Lena Ashwell, and Miss Ingram. Esmond rehearsed us most carefully and considerately, and gave a splendidly vivid performance of a strangely dramatic character himself—a cripple whose nature and temperament were warped by his misfortune and who worked the evil of the story. I doubt if Miss Lena Ashwell ever played better than in this play, though perhaps she won't thank me for saying so. I have seen and admired much of her work on the stage. Of course, she has played many parts in pieces that ran for a long time and therefore made a greater impression on the public, such as in *Mrs. Dane's Defence* and many others, but with the advantage of the author's ideas, and in consultation with him, I think she never reached a higher plane in her art than in *Grierson's Way*. The play did not prove attractive, but the business improved steadily for each of the four *matinées*, and it was beginning to be talked about a great deal when the last was reached.

I am afraid that about this time I struck an unlucky streak. On April 28, 1899, I played in another play by L. N. Parker and Murray Carson at the Garrick, entitled *Change Alley*, founded on the dramatic episode in history of the South Sea Bubble. Much had been hoped for from this comedy drama, and it seemed to contain the elements of success during rehearsals. It partook of the nature of plays known as old comedies, was full of seemingly good parts, and a splendid company of London favourites were engaged for its representation; but, alas! it fell hopelessly flat in performance, was condemned by the Press unanimously, and only ran

eleven nights. I don't think the fault lay with the actors. On June 8, 1899, an article of mine appeared in *The Stage* on the subject of Stage Traditions, in which I pointed out the advantage of at least considering the effects produced by our predecessors, and called attention to several noteworthy examples of the great moments that had pleased and interested our fathers and mothers, in every case referring to the author's text to prove their truth and value.

On July 11, 1899, a great supper was given by the Eccentric Club to the American visitors then in London, at which the American Ambassador (Mr. Joseph H. Choate) responded for the guests most eloquently. Amongst the well-known Americans present were David Belasco, John Drew, De Wolf Hopper, T. Henry French, Charles Klein, Nat Goodwin, McKee Rankin, and Burr McIntosh. What extraordinarily fine orators the Americans are as a rule! I have known many good after-dinner speakers in my time—the late Charles Dickens, jun., J. Comyns Carr, and several others—but the four very best I ever heard in their order were James Russell Lowell, Robert Ingersoll, Chauncey Depew, and Joseph H. Choate.

On July 21, 1899, *Rosemary* was played with nearly all the original cast for Charles Wyndham's last appearance at the Criterion "after twenty-three years of continuous management." I don't quite know why, for he has often acted there since, but probably it was not his intention to do so at the time I write of. In 1899, four big benefits took place. The recipients were all loved and respected by the profession as well as the public. The former, including the writer, gladly joined in making up monster

programmes, and the latter responded by their attendance and subscriptions, so that liberal results were obtained in each case. The first was that of Miss Lydia Thompson, held at the Lyceum, May 2. Miss Thompson was in her day the most dashing, shapely, pretty, and fascinating of burlesque boys, the wife of Alexander Henderson, and mother of that charming actress, Miss Zeffie Tilbury, who has found a successful field for her work for many years in America. As a young woman, Miss Thompson got a large amount of notoriety and advertisement by horse-whipping a man on the Press in Chicago, who had incurred her anger by some insulting remarks about her. On September 21, 1899, Charles Morton was given a birthday testimonial at the Palace with an immense programme of stars drawn from both theatre and music hall. Morton was the pioneer of the improved variety theatre of London and was often written of as the "father of the modern music hall." He had also some experience of theatres proper, having been the manager of the Philharmonic, Islington, when the immensely successful opera bouffe *Genevieve de Brabant* was produced with Miss Emily Soldene as Drogon, on November 11, 1871. For hundreds of nights this tuneful opera drew all London to this somewhat out-lying theatre and made a large sum of money. After its run there, and, I think, one succeeding musical play, Mr. Morton became Miss Soldene's manager, and conducted her tours through Great Britain and the United States for some years, finally returning to his first love, the music hall, and becoming manager, in turn, of the Alhambra and the Palace, etc. At the latter he finished his career and his hard-working



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life, and was greatly respected and regretted. The Philharmonic Theatre afterwards became the Grand, and is now given over to variety as the Islington Empire. Miss Soldene (whom I had once heard sing as Miss Fitzhenry at the old Oxford Music Hall) held a foremost place amongst comic opera singers for many years. She had a splendid voice and presence and was a thorough artist. She has written a book of her recollections, which is full of interest and amusing matter. The third of these benefits was tendered to Mrs. Billington at the Lyceum, November 28, 1899. A bumper programme and attendance! Few actresses were more respected. For years and years at the old Adelphi Theatre she had played all sorts of parts, and all of them faultlessly. I did not see her Gretchen in Jefferson's original performance of *Rip Van Winkle*, 1865, but he assured me in later years that she was the best he had ever played with. I did see her do an ideal piece of work in *No Thoroughfare* in 1867, when that play was first produced with an enormous cast, including Fechter, Ben Webster, Henry Neville, George Belmore, John Billington, Miss Carlotta Leclerq, Mrs. Alfred Mellon, and others. If I remember, she had only one scene—in the first act or prologue—but it stands out in my recollection as a very gem. Her Margery (*Rough Diamond*), Daphne (*Pygmalion and Galatea*), and the Widow Melnotte with me were splendid performances. Indeed, she touched nothing she did not adorn, and her list of successful impersonations would take a column to themselves. When it is added that she was a good-natured, humorous, whole-souled comrade, thoroughly womanly and sincere, it may be gathered that "Auntie B.," as her intimates

delighted to call her, was everybody's friend, and everybody vied in doing her honour. I am glad to say she is still with us. The last of the four benefits was John Hollingshead's at the Empire. On this occasion I acted as a steward, as well as appearing in the programme. I have alluded so fully to J. H.'s sterling qualities earlier in these recollections that I need only add that his friends rallied round him in goodly numbers and the occasion was an unqualified success. On December 5, 1899, a grand military concert promoted by Miss Ellaline Terriss and Mr. C. P. Little took place at the Albert Hall, for the benefit of the wives and families of the soldiers serving in the South African War, as well as their widows and orphans. It was, indeed, a monster affair. The immense building was thronged in every part. The programme lasted for more than five hours, and the whole was an overwhelming triumph, yielding a very large sum of money. I worked on the committee and as a steward, as well as helping on the stage.

In the autumn of 1899 I was engaged by Wilson Barrett for a play written by him and L. N. Parker, named *Man and His Makers*. He had the highest hopes of it, and produced it splendidly at the Lyceum with an excellent cast on October, 7, but it failed completely, and was received by Press and public with such lukewarm interest that it made way for the ever-popular *The Sign of the Cross* on October 19. We played some *matinées* of *Hamlet*, in which I acted the Ghost, and the season closed December 16, 1899.

A few references to Barrett may be of interest here. His career was a most varied one. A good sound actor of experience and skill, he married a very charming

lady, Miss Heath. She was spoken of as "reader to the Queen" (Victoria). I never quite understood what that position implied, or its functions, but she was a thorough artist, and a most amiable gentlewoman who had been reared under the tutorage of Charles Kean, in his days of glamour, success, and royal patronage at the Old Princess's. I played Captain Levison with her in a revival of *East Lynne* at the Olympic, 1879. With his wife, Barrett travelled the provinces, making good money, and eventually became manager of theatres in Hull and Leeds. Then he came to London and took the Court, where he produced several plays, including *Romeo and Juliet*, with Madame Modjeska as Juliet, himself as Mercutio. From the Court he migrated to the rebuilt Princess's, and here he held sway for many seasons with a series of very successful melodramas, such as *The Lights o' London*, *Hoodman Blind*, and last, but by no means least, that admirable play, *The Silver King* (1882), by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman. This sterling acting play ran for many months, and made Barrett a rich man, as, besides its success at the London theatre, numerous provincial companies were profitably employed in playing it. Then Barrett got "a bee in his bonnet," that he wanted to play higher class work, and produced such plays as *Claudian*, *Clito*, and later on, *Hamlet*. That his public did not want him in this kind of work was amply demonstrated. He not only lost money in London, but he cut the ground from under his many successful country companies, and in a short time he had not only squandered his comfortable fortune but was quite heavily in debt, and in the hands of harpies who kept him toiling for their rapacious greed. But

Wilson Barrett was an indefatigable worker, and never knew when he was beaten, and fortune turned her smiling face on him once more when he wrote and produced that almost world-beating and attractively-named success, *The Sign of the Cross*. It was not a great play surely, though full of theatrical effect, and its "fate hung in the balance" for a time, but it possessed an element which appealed to the religious section of the public which gave it its first "send off." About every decade one of these plays does seem to crop up and assert itself. But whatever the reason, *The Sign of the Cross* soon became the absolute rage of playgoers in every part of the English-speaking world, was being played everywhere, and Wilson Barrett was a well-off man again. From what I know it would not surprise me to hear that this play had made money and earned royalties enough to establish a positive "record" up to date. And every one who knew "Will" Barrett was delighted! He had not an enemy! He was quite a good writer, his name is connected with the authorship of many well-known and successful plays. Above all he was a kindly, charitable, good fellow, with a great love of and feeling for his fellow artists. I have been assured that at the time of his greatly regretted death, July 23, 1904, he had on his salary list something like £40 a week for old pensioners who had "fallen by the way," and whom he employed for small and "walk on" parts at a salary on which they could live, whereas ordinary supers at one-third of the sum would have done the work as well. His kindly acts were many and frequent, and all done without ostentation and "under the rose," where no advertisement could be intended or expected. He used to tell

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one or two amusing stories. One was of his dresser, a very cockney young man indeed. Barrett decided to have his somewhat straight hair curled for one of his parts (I think it was Claudian). At the dress rehearsal he sent this dresser round to the front to report on the effect. When he came back to Will's dressing room, in answer to questions he replied :—" Upon my soul, Governor, you looks all 'ead." On another occasion he was leaving rehearsal, and hailing a hansom cab he was about to enter it, and stood with one foot on the step abstractedly thinking of some engrossing business matter, when the cab-driver said, impatiently : " Now, then, Wilson, get in ! I knows where you wants to go to if you don't ! "

When Barrett struck his ill-fortune he gave up the Princess's and became a wanderer. His subsequent appearances in London were at the Princess's (return), the Lyric (twice), the Lyceum (twice) and the Olympic. He also made tours of Australia and the United States. *The Sign of the Cross* was produced first at St. Louis, U.S.A. Its first performance in England was at the Grand, Leeds, August 26, 1895, and its initial appearance in London was at the Lyric, January 4, 1896. It had numerous revivals, including the one I played in. Wilson Barrett, in addition to being a prolific author, was a great stage director and an admirable actor. Amongst his best characters were his Claudian, Wilfred Denver (*Silver King*), Marcus Superbus (*Sign of the Cross*), etc., but perhaps the very greatest and most unqualified artistic success of his later life was Pete in a dramatic version of Hall Caine's story, *The Manxman*. In this he was most convincing and admirable. A few

paragraphs back I wrote of my streak of ill-luck which I encountered. Perhaps the greatest instance of it occurred at the end of 1899. On the Saturday on which *Man and His Makers* was produced I received an offer from Charles Hawtrey to play the Messenger in *A Message from Mars* on its first production. I waited till the Monday, when the lukewarm reception of the former play by Press and public made it tolerably certain that it was no good, and then I asked Barrett to release me from my contract. Plucky and optimistic as he was, he replied that "he was sure it would work into a big success and he intended to make it do so," and he reluctantly declined to accede to my request. I am quite sure that when he spoke he believed what he said. He was far too considerate and generous to have stood in a fellow-actor's light without good reason; but, as I have shown, the play ran two weeks and his whole season about nine, and *A Message from Mars* ran 550 nights off the reel and has been revived again and again.

## XXV

THE whole story of the production of *A Message from Mars*, for which I was directly responsible, is so dramatic as to amount to a perfect "Romance of the Stage." The circumstances are as follows: Written by Mr. Richard Ganthony—an Englishman who had been in the United States for years—it had been offered to and declined by nearly every manager in that country. Indeed, I have been told, within a year of the time I am penning these notes, by Mr. Jay Witmark, the music publisher of New York, who sometimes dabbles in plays, that the author for whom he was acting at the time, requiring some money for a private purpose, instructed him to sell it outright for five hundred dollars (about £100), and that without success. Read by the light of subsequent events, this may seem incredible, but if any mistake has been made, it is not mine. I give my authority for the statement. Then the author came to England, and still could not find an opening for the play. About to return to New York, he sought me out and asked me to interest myself in the matter. Before sailing he came to my house and read the play to me. I don't think he did himself justice. At all events, I was not greatly struck with it, but still certain points did, undoubtedly, arrest my attention, and it was arranged that he should leave it with me to do my

best with it, and he sailed away. After he had been gone about two weeks, I took the play from my desk and read it myself one evening, with the result that I found myself unusually interested. A large lump in my throat, tears in my eyes, and the blood coursing quickly through my veins—all not unmixed with genuine amusement—convinced me I had found something out of the ordinary. But, thinking that I might be in a peculiarly emotional or hysterical frame of mind that night, I put it away for another space of two or three weeks, when I read it again with the same result in an increased degree, if possible. I then made up my mind as to its value, and that I would never rest until I got it produced. I saw Hawtrey at once on the subject, and after talking it over with him, I sent it to him to read. He did not agree with me about it, and returned it as of no use. I tried Charles Wyndham. He returned it, telling me it was only a hash up of Dickens's Scrooge! I pointed out to him that Scrooge was an old miser, who could not be expected to get sympathy from an audience, but the leading man of *A Message from Mars* was humorous and human, and never ought to lose the sympathy if properly played. No good; he would not entertain it. Then I tried Forbes-Robertson and Herbert Waring, who was about to start a management, which turned out disastrously, at the Imperial. No luck in either case. Then I approached Hawtrey again, with increased earnestness and stronger recommendation. He consented to read it carefully again. Did so, and again returned it as worthless. Finally, when all hope seemed gone, he and I met one night at the Green Room Club. He was in sore trouble, and badly in want of a



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play. I once more broached the subject, and after some exchange of views, it was arranged that I should join him at breakfast at his flat the next morning and go into the matter more fully. This I did, and read to him two short scenes from the play on which I thought its success seemed to turn. He became convinced I was right, at last, and said, "By Jove! I see it now! If I can have a few changes made in it to make it more suited to my purpose I will do it, and do it next." I consented to this, and the production was arranged. Even then only he and I were strong in our belief. At the dress rehearsal a dear friend of his appeared in despair, and apparently regarded me with feelings far removed from those of kindness, and a mutual chum (that good fellow, Walter Pallant, long since gone to his rest) voiced his opinion thus: "Jack! What have you let our pal, Charlie, in for?" I replied: "It will run a year, Walter!" He answered: "My dear chap! It will never finish!" The eventful night came—November 22, 1899. I finished my performance early at the Lyceum and got down to the Avenue in time to see the last act from the pit and meet the audience when they came out. Never have I heard such general praise for a new play! Hardened Press men were raving about it, and the paying public, wiping the honest tears from their eyes, were shaking each other's hands hysterically, and (in one case) looking for beggars to be charitable to on the spot. Its success was unequivocal and emphatic. Had it not been so it could not have stood the "set back" still in store for it. Hawtrey sprained his shoulder falling in the second act, and the next performance took place on the Monday

week—the theatre being closed in the interim. Think what that meant to a new production ! It ran for a year and a half ! and it has been playing somewhere ever since. Of course, the aggregated profits represent a very large sum of money to all concerned, however they may have been divided. Now I do not wish to claim any extraordinary credit in this matter, but I do claim this for actors who, like myself, have worked conscientiously for a great number of years in our calling. Few plays that can be brought before us are very original. Every one, and nearly every scene, is reminiscent of something we have met before. I could make out a very long list of plays with their originals opposite to them. Why, even Shakespeare is credited with annexing the plots of others ! An actor would be a fool who said he could surely judge the value of a play from reading it, and still more of a fool if that play depended for its success on its cleverness. Such plays may go wrong from a hundred different causes. But there are certain notes of humanity running through some plays which the experienced actor recognises as never failing in their power to move and interest an audience ; and these are the notes in which it is tolerably safe to invest capital. Such a note I found in *A Message from Mars* unmistakably. I had achieved some of my most important successes as an actor in similar scenes, and I felt very confident I was on the right track in this case. The result spoke for itself. A good deal was said about the changes made in the play by Hawtrey's brother, under his direction, and these changes were the subject of an action by the author against a London newspaper, in which I was a

witness, and I venture to think my evidence had something to do with the result of the trial, which was won by Mr. Ganthony with substantial damages. I was able to testify on oath that the changes made most certainly improved the play as a vehicle for Charles Hawtrey's charming light comedy method, and in this respect only; that wherever the construction was changed, it was not for the better, and that had an actor with a stronger method produced the play, it would have succeeded as it stood. That is my deliberate opinion to-day. If Forbes-Robertson had produced *A Message from Mars exactly* as it stood, in my judgment it would have brought him just as big a success, as he afterwards found in *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, with which, I think, it compared very favourably. Only the fortune would have come to him some years earlier. Having said so much, I should not like to leave the subject without expressing my appreciation of the delightful, even great, performances in the play. Charles Hawtrey himself was absolutely brilliant as Horace; humorous, refined, and, withal, instinct with feeling, he delighted everybody. Arthur Williams, as the tramp, was no whit behind him—funny, human, and pathetic; his performance was a masterpiece. G. S. Titheradge (now returned to his countless friends in Australia and his beloved gardening and bulb-growing) was sound and effective as the Messenger. Poor Mrs. Pateman (whose great physical sufferings ended in her sad death some years ago) was a model Auntie; and Miss Jessie Bateman won all hearts by her sweet enactment of the ingénue. All the small parts were well played, and one and all aided

in a wonderful artistic and financial success. For me, the conduct of the business presented many points of recurring anxiety, and I was heartily glad when the ship "was safely steered into harbour."

February 22, 1900, found me playing in a comedy at the Vaudeville by Miss Clo. Graves, entitled *The Bishop's Eye*. Amongst my comrades were Yorke Stephens, Ernest Hendrie, Miss Carlotta Addison, Miss Granville, and a curiously named young lady, Miss Ellas Dec. The play was not successful, and ran only nine nights. The season was nominally under the management of Yorke Stephens, but the real "man behind the gun" was a person well known in another walk of life, of whom, I am afraid it must be said, in the terms applied by Charles Brookfield to another man, considerably in the public eye—that *he was not quite a gentleman*.

On May 5, 1900, I appeared at the Adelphi as Petronius in Stanislaus Strange's dramatisation of the Polish author, Henry Sienkiewicz's, great book *Quo Vadis?* The play was produced in London by an American manager, Mr. Fred Whitney, who had travelled it with great success for a long time in the United States. It was a most sumptuous and artistic production, with a fine cast, including Robert Tabor, G. W. Anson, Edward Sass, Robert Pateman, A. G. Poulton, myself, Miss Wallis, Miss Lena Ashwell, Edmund Gurney, Franklyn Dyall, and a long list of names in smaller parts. On the first night it appeared an unqualified success, and, indeed, every one who saw it liked it, but it had distinctly bad luck. At this particular time England, and especially London, was staggering under

the severe blow of the reverses in the South African War, and although "an Englishman with his back to the wall" is a difficult man to beat, and no one really doubted the final outcome of the struggle, at this juncture every one appeared in a sullen frame of mind and with teeth firmly set doggedly refused to be amused or to consider amusement. I candidly believe that at a more propitious time this production would have been a great attraction. As it was, it only ran four weeks to June 1. It was pleasant to find oneself in a Roman toga again—always one of my very favourite costumes to act in—and the public appeared to be pleased with my work, if applause was any testimony. This was one of the last appearances of that extremely good actor and charming gentleman, Robert Tabor. He was an American who had made his home in England for some time and had gained troops of friends. Poor "Bob" died shortly after this of acute tuberculosis, to the grief of all who knew him. On July 23, 1900, I played one week at the Coronet in conjunction with Courtice Pounds and Holbrook Blinn, this time an Indian chief, one Lonely Tree, chief of the Apaches, in a playlet by Basil Hood called *The Great Silence*. I had seen quite a little of Indians in my various trips to America, and I tried to give a good study of the part. I also played Old Heinrik in the two first periods of Basil Hood's version of the Danish play *Ib and Little Christma*. This was a very old man indeed (in the second period a nonagenarian) and gave me some amount of anxiety, but I hope, and was assured by my managers, all turned out well.

On October 6, 1900, William Mollison, who had made a good reputation in the provinces and had also played several successful engagements in London, took the Lyceum for a season, and opened with a drama based on the Boer War written by Seymour Hicks and F. G. Latham. It was called *For Auld Lang Syne*, and a capital company was engaged in its representation, including Mollison, Leonard Boyne, W. L. Abingdon, myself, Bassett Roe, Wilfred Draycott, W. Devereux, Misses Fanny Brough, Irene Rooke, and Lily Hanbury in a rather long cast. It was, however, received very coldly by Press and public, and was a failure, finishing its run on October 31. This led up to a very interesting revival of *Henry V.* on December 22, 1900, under the joint management of Mollison and Lewis Waller, which was quite a success, and but for the lamented death of our great Queen Victoria, causing the closing of the theatre for about two weeks, would have been still more so. It was doing finely when the sad event occurred. As it was, it ran seventy-nine nights up to March 16, 1901. It was not particularly well noticed by the Press, but the public liked it, and turned out for it in goodly numbers. Lewis Waller gave a dashing performance of the name-part, especially in the elocutionary and declamatory passages. In the more inspired portions he was not quite so satisfactory. He seemed to lack the higher poetic note that carries Henry into the realms of ecstasy at certain moments of the play. Mollison was an admirable Pistol, humorous and unctuous, and his fine rolling voice was of great assistance to him in his excellent delineation.

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E. M. Robson was a quaint and really good Fluellen; Miss Sarah Brooke a dainty and piquant Princess Katherine; and that beautiful and sweet-dispositioned woman, Lily Hanbury (cut off, alas, in her glorious young womanhood), looked an absolute Goddess in the robes of Chorus, and declaimed her speeches most tellingly. I played Williams, the bluff soldier. Other parts were ably, most of them finely, sustained by Norman McKennel, George Warde, Arthur Lewis, Tom Heslewood, Charles Rock, C. Goodhart, Gerald Lawrence, W. Devereux, Frank Dyall, Miss Zeffie Tilbury, and Miss Kate Phillips.

February 12, 1901, was a red-letter day for me. On that day I was installed Master of Drury Lane Lodge of Freemasons. I had joined the Masonic Craft as far back as my stock days in Edinburgh, 1873, but after going a little way only in the study I let it drop for a number of years. About 1888 or 1889 I was induced, by my good friend Harry Nicholls, principally, to become a member of Drury Lane Lodge, and, with more time to think about it, I soon became bitten with the dignity and far-reaching good of the craft. I became a regular attendant at Lodge and a punctual student at the Logic Club of instruction, and by the time my turn came to take office in the Lodge I was fairly proficient. After working through the offices, beginning about 1896, I reached the Chair of the Lodge in 1901, and I hope I did my work efficiently. At this time, it will be remembered, English Masons were in rather an unsettled state. Our Queen was dead, and her son, our then King, had resigned the office of Grand Master, as he was bound to



J. H. BARNES AS W.M., DRURY LANE LODGE,  
NO. 2127, F.A.M.

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do (creating for himself a new dignity, that of Grand Protector of the Craft), and his successor, the Duke of Connaught, had not been elected. Rising to propose the first toast at the banquet following the ceremony, I said I found myself in rather a dilemma. I did not suppose the company would expect me to pass over current events without some reference to the memory of the great monarch who had been taken from us, but that not trusting myself to do justice to that memory in spoken words I had put my thoughts into a few lines which I asked to be allowed to read. This was a poem, "Victoria, 1837-1901," in which I had summarised, in a simple manner, her grand life under the heading of the four seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. This proved very much to the taste of all present. The Editor of *The People*, being present, asked me for a copy, which I gave him, and it was published in that paper on March 3, 1901, and the next thing I knew was a letter of thanks from his Majesty King Edward VII. for the verses. Who sent them to the King I do not know, but I plead guilty to sending them to the Duke of Connaught after the receipt of the first letter, and I got a most gracious reply from him also. This is the first time that this fact has been publicly announced in England. Later on I wrote another scrap, entitled "Crowned," in commemoration of our popular King Edward's deferred coronation. I confess sending a copy to the King, the Prince of Wales (now King George V.), and the Duke of Fife, and from each of them I got a charming letter of acknowledgment and thanks. I endeavoured to discharge my Masonic duties conscien-

tiously, and it was a great disappointment to me that my professional engagements took me to America in the autumn, and I was unable to install my successor, my old friend Luigi Lablache. During my Masonic career, extending over twenty years, apart from my constant attendance at my own lodge, at which I witnessed eleven Installations, I had the pleasure of visiting the Asaph, the Athelstan, the Green Room, and the Richard Eve. These were all Installation meetings, whilst I was present at the Consecration of the Yorick and the Hogarth Lodges. Amongst other events of note was a luncheon given by Drury Lane Lodge to Lord Kitchener, one of its founders, December 1, 1898, on his return from Egypt; a visit by the Logic Club to the Jubilee Masters' Lodge, at which we gave a most successful exposition of our working, January 5, 1901; and the Installation of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, as Grand Master of English Freemasons, at the Albert Hall, July 17, 1901. This latter was a highly impressive event. The vast building filled in every corner with fully-clad Masons made a sight to be remembered, whilst the effect of certain details in the ceremonial was positively electrical. During my year as Master I initiated at Drury Lane the late intrepid hero, Captain Scott, into Masonry, and in 1902 I took the chair at an important function at the Logic Club. Though I have abated no jot of my admiration for the tenets, the ritual, and the noble charities of the Masonic craft, I have withdrawn a great deal from its ceremonials in recent years for other and weighty reasons.

About the year 1900 I conceived the notion of

utilising my experiences as a public reader (in the days before I adopted the regular stage as a profession), and from that time down to the present have done quite a good deal of reciting—sometimes for charity, sometimes in the hope of amusing my friends, sometimes for benefits, and many times under engagement. For Charity I have recited for the *Referee* Children's Dinner Fund (twice), St. Mathias Church, Earl's Court, Restoration Fund, Eustace Miles's Starving Poor on the Embankment Fund (twice), Herne Bay Curate's Fund, Theatrical Garden Party, Playgoers' Club Ladies' Concert, Duchess of Portland's Hospital Fund at Nottingham. For amusement many times at Masonic gatherings, and such meetings as the Eccentric Club ladies' afternoon, the Beaufort Club (twice), the Bons Frères Club, etc. For benefits, the *matinée* given to Edward Swanborough (son of my old manageress, at the Strand in 1873, previously mentioned), at the Pavilion, June 1906, a *matinée* organised by Miss Ellaline Terriss at the Queen's in aid of the Royal Free Hospital, December 1907, and another *matinée* at the Ardwick Empire (whilst in Manchester, January, 1909) for the funds of the infirmary and Ardwick Empire Cot. In the way of engagements for a fee I have appeared at the Old Acquaintance Musical Society's concerts (twice). Brighton Palace Pier concerts (Sunday afternoon and evening), Stationers' Old Boys' Society (four times), Vaudeville Dramatic Club, and at the National Sunday League concerts (eighty-nine times).

This latter movement is one in which I take a very keen interest, and I firmly believe it is doing good work.

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Outside the question of money earned, it is a matter of considerable self-gratification to find oneself taking part in a programme that appears to afford such genuine enjoyment to a large number of people who are being uplifted by fine music and other intellectual items, and who, but for these concerts, would be far less profitably employed, as was the case before this movement was inaugurated. I have given myself a considerable amount of work to please these various audiences in and all about London. I have also had happy experiences (three times) at the Beckenham Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Society at the invitation of my old and valued friend Albert Neville. He is the son of that fine actor and good fellow the late Henry Neville. As a boy he was very anxious to follow in his father's footsteps and join the theatrical profession, but that father, who had realised the precarious nature of the calling, persuaded him to become "a man of business," and it is a matter of rejoicing to an enormous circle of friends, who love him, that he followed that sound advice with the best result. Albert is a successful and well-off man. In Freemasonry he found the outlet for his gifts of memory and elocution, which he had felt as a boy, and he is, perhaps, a little the best exponent of the Masonic Ritual I have ever heard. A kind, good fellow, he is in complete sympathy with the sentiments he has to utter, and he delivers them with unusual charm and impressiveness. I can never forget being present on an occasion when his father heard him for the first time take a prominent part in a ceremony of which he, the father, was only a good (not a great)

exponent. It was a most human and pathetic moment, in which he realised not only his son's great proficiency, but also the possibilities of distinction in the walk of life that he had himself adorned, which had animated and slumbered in his boy's mind from youth upwards. On the occasion of Albert's installation as Master of Drury Lane Lodge it fell to my lot to propose Henry Neville's health amongst others, and I ventured to suggest the happiness the occasion must, perforce, afford him. In his reply he acknowledged that happiness in most felicitous terms, and added : " My son has never given me a moment's uneasiness since he was born." If it is true that the Recording Angel is ever present, that statement ought to mean a good big mark in Albert's favour (as Mephistopheles says in *Faust*) " by and by."

The late awful death of Richard Green reminds me that on April 15, 1901, I recited two items of my own writing at a *matinée* benefit concert for him at Steinway Hall, and for the first time to a musical accompaniment. Mr. Stanley Hawley, well known as a London organist and composer, had asked permission to set my poem, " The Mission of Judas," to music. I cheerfully consented, and we tried it together for the first time on this occasion, he playing his own composition. The effect seemed satisfactory, but it was a strange and not easy thing to do. " The Far West " was my other contribution. Poor Dick Green ! He had been in trouble and hard luck for years, but who would have thought he would take his own life in the way he did ? I am not a musician, though very fond of music ; but a great authority, a friend of his and mine, told me

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recently that Dick's troubles were inevitable, for the reason that his voice and talents were never quite good enough for the position to which he aspired, and in which he for a time considered he was firmly established.

## XXVI

THAT April 15 was an eventful day for me, as in the evening I appeared for the first time in the part of Menenius Agrippa in Sir Henry Irving's production of *Coriolanus* at the Lyceum, and made one of my best successes in London. It cannot be said that Irving's performance of the name part was one of his strongest impersonations. His expression of biting sarcasm and withering contempt for his foes was magnificent; and a thing to be remembered; but he lacked the physique for the warrior scenes of the part, and altogether failed to convey that side of the character. Neither was Miss Ellen Terry happy in Volumnia. Though her old charm was in evidence at every turn, her feeling, as expressed, was rather that of a sweetheart than the love of a Roman mother for a Spartan son, and many of the scenes were unconvincing. The Press were divided in their opinions, but on the whole lukewarm, and no one held his own or fared better in their judgments than Menenius. I enjoyed playing the part immensely; humorous, straightforward, and intensely human, he is a splendid foil to the somewhat gloomy principals, and is always welcome to the audience in scenes that are amongst the most natural of the play. Good performances came from Miss Maud Milton, James Hearn, Laurence Irving, and others, but the production was not



a brilliant success, and gave way to the repertory of the Lyceum Theatre in about two months. I played Lefebvre (*Sans-Gêne*) June 10; Marquis of Huntley (*King Charles I.*) June 24; Coitier (*Louis XI.*) July 1, and Menenius for the last night of the season, July 20. Immediately on my success in *Coriolanus* I had been engaged for the rest of the London season and the autumn tour in England and the United States for the parts mentioned. I had been in treaty with Mr. R. Flanagan, of the Queen's, Manchester, to play Falstaff in a revival of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at his theatre at Christmas, but nothing had been settled, and I fear Mr. Flanagan was a little angry at the time that I chose to take the longer and better engagement, though we have been quite good friends since. He was also considerably astonished when I told him that Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not a great "catch" to play and is not a very good part; but I had the authority of some one who knew much more about it than either he or I for saying so. It may be taken as an axiom that plays written to order are rarely good ones, and nearly always show the mechanism pretty strongly, and it is recorded that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* was written by Shakespeare at the special request of Queen Elizabeth, who desired to see the Fat Knight brought under female influence—in other words, in love scenes. Assuredly, the play bears out this idea—it cannot be called a good one, and Falstaff is most certainly secondary to the Wives if not to other parts, in this instance. Of course, if an artist has played the real great Falstaff in *Henry IV.*, Part I, and his name is associated with it, he can well afford to play that in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and

the audience will receive him with acclamation therein. Otherwise he is liable to be disappointed in a part which does not present the chances it is supposed to.

The tour of the Lyceum company began on September 2, and we visited Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds, and Birmingham, and in each of these places the same story had to be told about *Coriolanus*—poor notices in the Press generally and individually, except for Menenius, and poor business, and finally it was determined to cut the play out of the repertory and not take it to America at all. No one could blame the management. It meant a great deal of extra expense, and it was not a paying investment. Nevertheless, it was a genuine disappointment to me. *Coriolanus* had not been seen for many years, and Menenius meant for me as much as a good original part in which I had hoped to please my American friends, but it was not to be, and it was no good worrying over it. Of course, in the princely arrangements of Sir Henry Irving it made no difference to my engagement, and we sailed from Tilbury on the s.s. *Minnehaha* (Captain Robinson) on October 5, 1901. The voyage was an exceptionally pleasant one. As will be gathered from my earliest notes, I had known a great many mutual friends of Sir Henry's in my salad days. Naturally, when he achieved his big position in life our ways lay a good deal asunder, but on this trip the gap seemed to be closed up again. He invited me constantly to dine with him in his private room, and, in company with his friend Joe Parkinson (who was also a great Masonic friend of mine), and who made the trip both ways with us, we had some delightful hours, chatting over old times and old associations, and no man on earth could have

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been kinder or more positively brotherly than he was.

We opened in New York at the Knickerbocker Theatre, October 21, and after four weeks there started on a full tour of the country east of the Rockies. We went to Philadelphia after New York, and whilst there the thirtieth anniversary occurred of Irving's first night of *The Bells* in London and of my first appearance on the stage as his "double." This was on November 25. I thought it a fitting occasion to write him a little note of remembrance and good wishes. To it I received the following pretty and sympathetic reply—

"The Bellevue,  
"Broad and Walnut Streets,  
"Philadelphia.

"MY DEAR BARNES,

"I thank you for your kind wishes, which I wish back with all my heart. Thirty years! Friends are fewer, and kind words are precious, and again I thank you for a remembrance which has touched my heart. God bless you, old friend.

"Yours ever,  
"HENRY IRVING.

"November 25, 1901."

A great man, my masters! Great in big things and great in little things as well. We finished our tour at Harlem, March 17, 1902, and sailed from New York by the s.s. *Minneapolis* (Captain F. F. Gates) on March 22. Sir Henry Irving greatly affected The Atlantic Transport line of steamers and, as in other matters, his good judgment was proverbial.

On the voyage out to America (October 1901) a gentleman connected with journalism in the State of Connecticut was pleasantly impressed with some of my poems and asked me for copies of them, and a series was reprinted in newspapers in Manchester, Conn., and Hartford, Conn. I had one amusing experience with Irving during the tour. As was well known, he had a remarkable faculty for putting an enormous amount of meaning into the shortest possible sentences, and many instances are remembered of the smart things he said—cynical, satirical, and amusing—in a word or two, only. Once at the Green Room Club he was being bored by a schoolfellow and fellow-actor, who was very much of a pensioner of his, with a story of meeting a mutual schoolfellow in a picture gallery in Paris. All we heard was this: “And you know, Harry, he came up to me and said: ‘Surely your name is Fletcher?’” Irving replied, “And was it?” What more could be said? His quip with me was as follows:—We had played a week of two-night stands—Indianapolis, Columbus, O., and Toledo, O. It so fell out that I was not concerned in the programme all the week, and although journeying with the company in the ordinary way I had not appeared, or met him, from the one Saturday night to the next. The play was *Louis XI*. I had played my first scene as Coitier, and was waiting to go on with him for his first entrance. Coming from his dressing-room with his usual formidable array of retainers he looked at me with a suggestive sly twinkle in his eye and said, inquiringly: “All right?” I replied, “Yes, thanks, very well indeed.” A moment’s pause and he said, “Ah, tired?”

## XXVII

HAVING now arrived at the year 1902, I do not suppose my readers will expect me to deal as exhaustively with events which come within the memory of many; so for this and other reasons I propose to pass many of them more cursorily than in my preceding pages. On April 28, 1902, Mr. Beerbohm Tree celebrated the fifth anniversary of his management of Her Majesty's Theatre, 1897-1902. The play was *Ulysses*, by Stephen Phillips, but a special souvenir programme was given away containing photographs of all the important artists who had appeared there during those years. Looking back on it now it seems a pretty comprehensive gallery of all the leading lights of the London stage. May 1, 1902, saw the production at the Adelphi by Miss Olga Nethersole of the play of *Sapho* by Clyde Fitch. The French book, by Alphonse Daudet, was a rather lurid affair, and the play done from it was rather lurid too, and I fear our star's performance of the leading rôle did not do much to tone down its luridness. It was fairly noticed, and the business was quite good for eleven weeks, finishing July 11. I played Dechelette, and others in the cast were Frank Mills, Eric Lewis, Holbrook Blinn, W. H. Day, Misses Olga Nethersole, Rosina Fillipi, Gladys Homfray. I have previously stated how much I admired Miss Nethersole's acting

on former occasions. I fear she had not improved in the interim. I suppose the desire to become a star and one's own master or mistress and make big money is a natural one, but it is not always conducive to good art, and I don't wish to be ungallant to Miss N., for whom I have a very genuine regard, when I say that it appeared as if the "reaching out" to capture and impress all sorts of indiscriminate audiences in all manner of sized theatres had brought into her work an amount of elaboration which obscured her own innate and clever ideals, and much of her old charm was submerged beneath a vortex of detail which often blurred and delayed the dramatic action. It is an immense advantage to us all to have some one whose judgment we can rely on, not only to tell us what to do, but also what not to do. And this brings me to a reflection, absolutely impersonal, which occurs to me as bearing on our calling in the broadest general way. My observation teaches me that there are three distinctly marked periods apparent in the careers of every artist of front rank whose work I have followed. First, when they can do little or nothing; second, when they do far too much; and, third, when they settle down to what may be called repose and art. Many never get beyond the first mark. Hundreds stop at the second, and those who reach the third are usually famous and honoured alike by the public and their fellow-artists. The misleading danger of the stage as a calling is its kindness to mediocrity. Any young man of fair appearance, with credit at his tailor's, and a little influence, can go on the stage and get three, four, or even five pounds a week to start with, whereas if you advertise a post, say, of a clerkship or

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secretaryship at a similar income (£200 a year) you will receive hundreds of applications from men of university education who can write B.A. or M.A. after their names, and whose capacity is undoubted. When I was a boy it used to be said that the Church was the outlet for all the younger and least talented sons of the county families, etc., and certainly the rural districts did present some curious specimens, here and there, of gentlemen, who had bought or been presented with "livings" or advowsons. That is all changed now, and the stage has become the dumping ground of the failures and "ne'er-do-wells" of every class of society and social grade. The influx has been, and is to-day, absolutely appalling. And once brought within the lure of the footlights, they rarely leave it. Mistaking a taste for a talent, they think they would like to be actors, and that that fact makes them so. It is most tragic. With no aptitude for the stage, and not much aptitude for anything else, they have never read the poets of the language and know nothing of its literature. They spend their youth in idleness and mild indifference, their middle-age in carping at and criticising their harder-working and more successful brethren, and their old age as the recipients of the theatrical charities. Ask any of the committee of these charities if I am right, especially those whose duties include the dispensing of funds, and they will tell you, as I do, that not once a month do they receive an application from any one whose name they ever heard in connection with the actor's art, though applicants abound in hundreds, and I have known cases where respected artists,

having a bad time, and too proud to apply to a Fund, have been asked by a committee to accept a temporary loan to tide them over a chasm till the clouds rolled away and a better time asserted itself. All this is, to me, quite the most pitiful phase of the theatrical profession of the present day, and I make no apology for my digression in order to call attention to it.

On May 27, 1902, a *matinée* of *Rosemary*, with nearly all the original cast, was given at Wyndham's under the patronage of the Queen and a numerous committee of the aristocracy and others, in aid of the fund for providing a new open-air sanatorium for the City of London Hospital for Diseases of the Chest, at Victoria Park.

July 14, 15, 16, I played Coitier in *Louis XI.*, for three nights at the Lyceum, a special engagement.

On August 9, I witnessed, with my wife, the procession of the deferred coronation of our great King Edward VII. from the window of a relative, who was a highly-placed official at the old War Office in Pall Mall. The military display was most brilliant, and it was altogether a noble and impressive sight.

September 20 found me at the Apollo playing in a comedy by Gilbert Dayle, entitled *What Would a Gentleman Do?* Amongst my comrades were Frank Mills, Dennis Eadie, Fred Emney, Louis Bradfield, Misses Nina Boucicault, Beatrice Ferrar, Marie Illington, and Enid Spencer-Brunton. It was a bright little play, but it did not succeed, and only ran about four weeks, till October 18. On the first night one comedy point evoked a most prolonged round of applause. The strong-willed woman (played by Miss Illington), with the usual



good heart, and managing everybody's business in the play, decided to refund to the light comedian some money he had lent, with a motive, to her ne'er-do-well nephew. The said comedian objected to take it. Seating herself at a writing-desk, she drew out a cheque-book, wrote a cheque hurriedly, and handed it to him, without looking, saying, "Whatever else I am, at least I'm a business woman!" He glanced at the cheque without taking it, and said quietly, "Well, you might sign it!" I am not quite certain that this play was cast to the best advantage in one or two parts. Some time afterwards I negotiated it for Nat Goodwin to play in the U.S. He appeared very enthusiastic about it when he secured the option, but, from some cause, he weakened before the time came to do it, and its first night in New York was a poor production, spoilt by lack of earnestness on his own part and that of others, and it failed again. I honestly think Mr. Dayle and his play deserved better luck.

November 17, 1902, I went with Sir Charles Wyndham to Brighton for a week. The plays were *David Garrick* and *Rosemary*, but I only played in the latter. Business enormous. At this time I was engaged by my old friend George Edwardes to play a character part in a musical comedy, but the part turned out really no good at all, and I transferred my allegiance to Sir Charles Wyndham, who paid me a retaining salary to hold myself for the opening of the New, then nearing completion. The New opened March 19, 1903, with *Rosemary*, and nearly all the original cast. We also played the same entertainment for one *matinée* at Brighton for the opening

of the New West Pier theatre. I don't know if the revival was too soon after the original run of the play, but the business was only fair, and the run finished on April 18. The Press notices, general and personal, were as good as ever. From April 20 to 25 we did a week of "flying visits" to Swansea, Bristol, Plymouth, Exeter, Bournemouth (Boscombe), and had crammed houses everywhere. Plays, *David Garrick* and *Rosemary*; again I only played in the latter. After this two weeks of *Rosemary*, at Wyndham's, April 25. The usual good notices but business moderate only. The Eccentric Club gave a supper (and dance) in honour of Sir Charles Wyndham, April 16, at which he took the chair and made a most eloquent and witty speech. As the fore-mentioned engagements are the last times I played with Charles Wyndham, except in the case of a benefit or two, I take it for granted I shall be expected to say something about him, and yet what more is there to be said than my readers and the public know? He has done such brilliant work on the stage of the last many years, and his name is so associated with much of what is best dramatically, that an appreciation from me must appear more or less fulsome. And yet my memory of him extends such a distance back that a few notes may be interesting. His father was connected with the medical profession, and he himself was trained for a doctor; indeed, he practised as one in the American Civil War, but forsook that profession for the stage at the close of hostilities or thereabouts. I saw him at the old Queen's in the late sixties, playing Captain Hawkesley in *Still Waters Run Deep*, to the John Mildmay of Alfred Wigan (the

original), and in the big casts, at the same theatre, which played *Dearer than Life* and *The Lancashire Lass*, and which included Irving, Toole, Brough, Sam Emery (a fine actor), Miss Hodson, pretty and sweet, Nelly Moore, and many others whose names were household words. I remember him at the St. James's in a curious play from the French of Sardou (*Daniel Rochat*). Then when Messrs. Spiers and Pond had grown tired of trying, in vain, to make the Criterion a success he became the lessee, and has remained so to this day, I think, without intermission. At the Criterion in its early days he started a series of brilliant farcical comedies, some of them, like *The Pink Dominos*, a little risky, but all great moneymakers in London and the provinces, with numerous companies. From these he gradually developed a better standard of play and acted many of the well-known works, in turn, such as *London Assurance*, *School for Scandal*, *Still Waters Run Deep* (himself as Mildmay, (1890), *Rosemary*, etc., etc., and so on by degrees his art maturing and growing till he became, and has remained, an idol of the London public and a consummate artist in every and the best sense of the word. His Mildmay did not make us forget Wigan, and his David Garrick did not efface that of the elder Sothorn, but they were both admirable performances. Perhaps he made a mistake to tackle *Cyrano de Bergerac*, but it did not count much against him. He was too firmly placed in the affections of the people, and it is a great characteristic of London audiences that they are more loyal than any other public in the world to the favourites they have learned to love. Such was, and is, Wyndham's

position to-day, firmly fixed in the public regard. He also carried the banner of English art abroad, playing, if I remember rightly, in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and St. Petersburg, and, I think, other Continental cities. Long may he live to enjoy his well-earned rest, his comfortable fortune, and the esteem of all classes of the public as well as the knighthood with which his King honoured him.

As well as being still lessee of the Criterion, he built and is proprietor of Wyndham's and the New. His leading lady, Miss Mary Moore, made her first appearance at the old Gaiety theatre at the time I was there in the late seventies—a pretty, timid, little gentlewoman, anxious to earn her living. She soon became the wife of that very clever dramatist, James Albery, before-mentioned. Associated with a brilliant actor and admirable stage-director like Charles Wyndham, she steadily progressed in her art, and in recent years has made several marked successes, such as, for instance, in *Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace*. Report has it that in pecuniary matters she has been even more successful, and, as a partner in many of Sir Charles's business projects, is quite well off. If so, it would be but a just reward for one great feature of her life—her intense love of, and care, in bringing up and educating her sons, in which respect she has ever shown the very highest qualities of motherhood.

The last performance at the old Gaiety took place July 4, 1903, when many old comrades and associates gathered to bid good-bye to a place endeared to all of us by memories of happy times. It then closed its

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doors for ever, to make way for its present palatial, if somewhat gloomy-looking successor, and, incidentally, for a new section of London itself. One rubs one's eyes in wonder when one looks at what is in that neighbourhood and remembers what was.

## XXVIII

ON July 14, 1903, a benefit *matinée* took place at Drury Lane Theatre for that progressive institution, the Actors' Association. *The Merchant of Venice* was the play, with Irving, Miss Ellen Terry, and all the prominent actors of the London stage playing the parts, down to the very smallest. Those for whom no speaking parts could be found walked on and were grouped in the Casket scene. I played the Duke of Venice. A feature of the entertainment was the presentation of a souvenir programme to every one in the audience, containing a reproduction of the autographs of every artist connected with the performance. This was the last time I played with Sir Henry Irving.

The autumn of 1903, September 17, saw produced at Drury Lane a drama by Henry Hamilton and Cecil Raleigh called *The Flood Tide*. It ran the usual course at that theatre up to December 1, when it made way for the preparations for the pantomime. A strong company played it, Messrs. Weedon Grossmith, C. W. Somerset, myself, R. Minster, J. Tresahar, N. McKinnel, Miss Margaret Halstan, Miss Daisy Thimm, Mrs. Beer-bohm Tree, and a very clever soubrette named Miss Claire Romaine. It was not one of the best of the Drury Lane plays and the business was not colossal,

but I was told, on excellent authority, that it was exceptionally successful afterwards in the London suburbs and the provincial towns.

On October 6, a testimonial *matinée* was given at the Haymarket Theatre to that excellent actor and popular typical Englishman John Billington (husband of the Mrs. Billington previously alluded to). It was an event in which everybody joined with all possible goodwill. A splendid committee was formed of leading actors, joined by a long list of names famous in other arts, science, and commerce. That brilliant artist Tom Browne designed the programme. Selections were given from popular plays, *The Last of the Dandies*, *Mrs. Gorrings's Necklace*, *Waterloo*, *The Monkey's Paw*, etc., with Tree, Wyndham, Miss Moore, Irving, Cyril Maude, Sydney Valentine, Miss Lena Ashwell, the Grossmiths, and their many associates, and the whole affair was a signal success. John Billington made a most feeling and pathetic little speech at the end, and a good many old friends found themselves greatly sympathising with the passing of such a good fellow. For many years he had been a member of the great company engaged by Ben Webster at the Adelphi, where his wife was also engaged. When that company dispersed he travelled the provinces with Mrs. Billington for some years in different plays of which they held the rights. In their company was their niece, Miss Ellen Meyrick, an excellent actress, who afterwards became Mrs. Fred Burgess, her husband being part-proprietor of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels. After that John settled down as stage manager, and playing many parts, with his old friend J. L. Toole, at Toole's and went with him on







*Photo]*

*[“ The Play Pictorial ”*

J. H. BARNES AS JOHN PEERYBINGLE  
(“The Cricket on the Hearth”)

*. [To face page 267*

his numerous tours until Toole retired, as before stated, from ill-health. Billington was a very excellent actor indeed, with a breezy, natural method that was most captivating. In parts of good rugged manhood, such as in *Rough and Ready* by Paul Merritt, he had few equals, no superiors. He was a splendid raconteur, and some of his Yorkshire stories, of which county he was a native, were humorous and droll in the extreme. Altogether a downright good comrade, socially and professionally.

I had left Drury Lane three days before the run of *The Flood Tide* finished, November 28, by courtesy of Mr. Arthur Collins, having been offered an engagement by Mr. Arthur Bouchier to play John Peerybingle in a revival of *The Cricket on the Hearth* at the Garrick. This production took place December 1, 1903, and ran till February 13, 1904. It turned out very luckily for me. In the version we did, John was an unusually good part. He had a dream scene with the little dancing fairies not generally included, and I thoroughly enjoyed playing him. I appeared to please my audiences very much as well. I am afraid Mr. Bouchier's physique was not suited to the part of Caleb Plummer. Mrs. Bouchier gave a vivid and pathetic rendering of Blind Bertha. Jerrold Robertshaw was the best Tackletom I have ever seen. He seemed to have walked out of the pages of Dickens. Jessie Bateman was a most sweet, pretty, and lovable Dot; Lizzie Webster a thoroughly droll and natural Tilly Slowboy. Other parts were well played by Frank Mills (Ned Plummer) and Elfrida Clement (May Fielding). Dorothy Grimston and Madge Titheradge were the leading fairies,

and the latter, who has since become a distinguished actress, looked a "dream" and danced delightfully. The play was received with qualified favour by the Press—though I had no cause to complain—and the business was only moderately good. An amusing little incident occurred on the first night. When the curtain fell on the spirited dancing of Sir Roger de Coverley, etc., it was rung up on the full company assembled on the stage again and again. There were plenty obvious calls of the name of the performer of John Peerybingle, and after some eight or nine repetitions of this, Mr. Bouchier took me by the hand and led me down to the footlights and presented me to the audience, which was very considerate of him!

March 31, 1904, I played in a slight comedy by Frank Stayton, called *A Maid from School*, at Terry's. It was not successful, and the public stayed away in large numbers. Miss Kitty Loftus was the manageress, and played the leading part.

April 25, 1904, was signalised by the first meeting at His Majesty's (the name having been changed to that) in connection with the Academy of Dramatic Art which has since become such a flourishing and potent institution. I was engaged as one of the instructors for the first two terms, and entered very heartily into the work, which I enjoyed. I am bound to say that my views changed very materially as time went on. I had firmly thought, at first, that it was a good thing that the aspirant should have a place where he could get good, sound instruction in the first steps of his profession, but when I became intimately associated with it and saw its other bearing, in the direction I have





*Photo]*

*[“The Play Pictorial”*

J. H. BARNES IN “THE FINISHING SCHOOL”

*[To face page 269*

recently called attention to—*i. e.* of flooding the stage with amateurs, to the exclusion of those who had “borne the heat and burden of the day”—I was honestly glad when rearrangements at the Academy itself and my own professional work terminated my connection with it. I should like to emphasise the fact that this was a case of honest change of opinion, and I still regard the question from my later point of view. Among the pupils who received their first lessons in my class during my short connection with the school were Mr. Reginald Owen and Miss Maud Cressall, who have both succeeded well in the profession in England, and Miss Maud Leslie, firmly established in America.

June 16, 1904, I commenced an engagement with Frank Curzon in a play at Wyndham's by that charming writer, Max Pemberton, called *The Finishing School*. Lots of good names figured in the cast: Ben Webster, Frank Cooper, myself, George Bellamy, Miss Ethel Mathews, Mrs. E. H. Brooke, and Miss Annie Hughes (who played the leading or star part), and a very long list in minor characters. The notices were fair, some very good, but the weather was dreadfully hot at the time. Theatres were out of the question, and the run terminated on July 16. Miss Hughes gave a delightful performance as Dorothy Melville, and looked perfectly bewitching when she went into her male costume. During the intense heat of that time the annual fête took place in the Botanical Gardens, Regent's Park, for the Actors' Orphanage Fund, when all who could find a part, joined Cyril Maude in a blood-curdling melodrama by poor Captain Robert Marshall, entitled *The Track of Blood*. I shall never forget the heat. I think

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we played the drama five times during the afternoon. To enumerate the cast is unnecessary. They were all the prominent names of London. A parboiled company! and a melting audience! I think, as the day progressed, *The Track of Perspiration* would have been a more fitting title, but no one grumbled. All was good humour and heartiness. The gardens were thronged. Thousands of the public got good value for their money. The charity benefited to a large amount, and all ended happily except that poor Brandon Thomas lost his voice shouting as the outside showman. Oh, how he shouted, as long as he could! In works of charity we actors do, undoubtedly, "hold our own." I remember reading years ago a story of the mother of the Gracchi, who was one day visited by a neighbour, a very vain woman, and the owner of very beautiful jewels, of which she was duly proud. In the course of conversation she said to her hostess, "But where are your jewels? You are wearing none." At this moment three splendid sons of the noble matron entered the room, and pointing to them with a mother's pride, she said, "These are my jewels." So I would claim for my calling this one sure characteristic. Whatever else we are, or whatever our foibles may be, once sound the tocsin "charity," and we are never "weary in well doing," and, I am bound to add, for many years the public have recognised the fact, and responded most nobly to any appeal we have made for our own charitable institutions.

Late in the year 1904 I had settled to play in a revival of Bernard Shaw's *Candida*, at the Court, besides which I had some weeks to run of my second term as one of the instructors at the Academy of Dramatic Art,

but Mr. Pinero (before he was Sir Arthur) settled with Mr. Frohman's manager that he would like me to go out to New York to produce, and play in, his play, *A Wife Without a Smile*. After some little parleying, I was kindly released from both my other engagements, and I sailed from Liverpool by the s.s. *Etruria* (Captain Warr), November 26, 1904. Arrived in New York, I found a perfect storm raging in the Press anent the play. It will be remembered that there was one effect in it to which some people took exception; indeed, there was a statement going round that a certain Royal personage had expressed the opinion that it would be better cut out. It is not my province to discuss it. I merely chronicle the fact. The New York Press had taken up the matter so warmly that Mr. Frohman thought it advisable to remove the objectionable feature, and the play was produced without it at the Criterion on December 19, 1904. The play may have been risky with it. It was meaningless without it, and failed completely, despite a strong cast including Ernest Lawford, Frank Worthing, Frank Atherley, myself, Misses Margaret Illington, Esther Tittell, Elsie de Wolf, and others. The notices were not bad; some good. Mr. Dan Frohman told me in conversation, afterwards, that they were bound by contract to do the play, but with the storm raised against it in the Press, there was nothing to do "but to kill it and get it off," which seemed hardly fair to Pinero, and not very satisfactory to me, as it only ran about a fortnight, but, fortunately, I had a limited guarantee. When the play failed so badly I was asked by the management to play a part in a new play about to be produced by my old friend Augustus



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Thomas, one of America's foremost dramatists, to which I cheerfully consented. It was called *Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots*, and first saw the light at the Savoy on January 16, 1905. It was an unequivocal success. Again the company was very strong, John Saville, E. Lawford, William Courtenay, Louis Payne, Vincent Serrano, myself, Jay Wilson, Misses Dorothy Hammond, Jessie Busley, Margaret Illington, Fay Davis, and Mrs. A. A. Adams (mother of Miss Maude Adams). The general notices were excellent, as were mine, personally, though I had by no means a good part. The business was enormous. I confess to a considerable disappointment in the matter. My engagement for Pinero's play had been for the run of the play with a six weeks' minimum guarantee, and naturally I concluded I was transferring my services to Mr. Thomas's on the same terms, and it was with no little dismay that I received the information from one of Mr. Frohman's henchmen, after the great hit made by the latter play, that I was only filling out my six weeks' minimum, for the reason that the management had so many people on their hands for whom they were bound to find employment first. I felt annoyed about it, but I had no one to blame but myself, and there was no remedy. As a matter of fact, I believe Mr. Guy Standing took my place, and the play ran well into the summer months. Without comment, I sailed for home on the s.s. *Minneapolis* with my friend Captain T. F. Gates, February 4, and arrived February 14, 1905.

## XXIX

SHORTLY after I reached home a young lady of great amateur experience, well-connected, and with a host of friends, essayed the part of Portia for two *matinées* at Terry's, March 9 and 11, 1905. She engaged me to play Antonio, and asked me also to stage-manage and produce the play. It was not an easy thing to get *The Merchant of Venice* on to a stage of the size of Terry's at all, but I thought it out, and with a little re-arrangement and abridgment prepared a version which solved the difficulty. Miss Constance Stuart, the lady in question, was more than intelligent as Portia; Norman Forbes quite as good as Shylock; Henry Ainley an admirable Bassanio; poor Loring Fernie bright and amusing as Gratiano, and Miss Madge Fabian a delightful Jessica. Of course the performances were of little general public interest, but the Press were quite favourable. Then Miss Tita Brand (daughter of the brilliant singer and dramatic actress, Miss Marie Brema) took the Shaftesbury and produced *Othello*, April 8. Mr. Herbert Jarman was the stage manager, and did his work excellently. The notices were very mixed, though, personally, I had no cause to complain, but the business was poor. And yet I venture to say that many worse performances of *Othello* have been highly praised and successful. Hubert Carter was full of power and

pathos as Othello; Henry Ainley about the best Cassio I have ever seen. His drunken scene was fine, without descending to the inane tricks so often associated with the part. Miss Granville excellent as Emilia; Miss Brand quite good as Desdemona. I played Iago; E. A. Anson, a really good Brabantio. On May 24 it was supplanted by *Renaissance*, a play which had a tremendous vogue on the German stage at the time. Much the same company played as in *Othello*, with the addition of Marie Brema herself, who gave a splendid performance. I played a monk called Father Bentavoglio; quite a good part. An increased orchestra played some most beautiful incidental music. Press indifferent. Business improving.

On June 4, 1905, a complimentary dinner was given at the Savoy Hotel, by the theatrical profession, generally, to Mr. Joseph Knight, the doyen of the dramatic critics of London, with Sir Henry Irving presiding, at which both ladies and gentlemen were present, and I had the pleasure of being joined by Mrs. Barnes, who, not being a member of our calling, enjoyed the (to her) novel experience immensely. Joseph Knight had been a true friend of the actors, though not a fulsome one. A fine specimen of manhood, a thorough Bohemian, but a brilliant well-read scholar with a kindly nature, he had been the critic of the *Globe* for years; also of the *Sunday Times* and the *Athenæum* on occasion. Erudite and thoughtful, he had held the balance fairly between praise and blame, and had earned and greatly enjoyed the love of all. That was the note struck in Irving's admirable speech in proposing his health, and it is needless to say it was

received with acclamation. This was the very last time I met Irving. On October 13, 1905, after dying on the stage as Becket, he passed away, finally, in the vestibule of his hotel at Bradford, dying, as I believe he would have wished to, literally "in harness." It was a tremendous grief to me when I learned it. Of course it was only a sentiment, but, having started with him, my own career seemed linked with his in some small way. His body was brought to London, and lay in the Baroness Burdett Coutts's house, in Piccadilly, for one or two days, where thousands passed it in solemn reverence, testifying their affection and appreciation of him and his life's work. After a time his ashes were laid in Westminster Abbey among the many illustrious Englishmen who have benefited their country. A fitting tribute to an artist of lofty ideals and a truly gentle man. One great characteristic of his, which cannot be too much insisted upon by his fellow actors, was this: Whatever position he achieved, whatever dignities or honours came to him (his knighthood in 1895, his LL.D., Dublin, 1892, and Glasgow, 1898, etc., etc.), he invariably went hand-in-hand with his calling. Believing in its possible nobility, if regarded from a high standpoint, he was the actor first in all things, shedding an endless lustre on the art he loved better than anything else in life.

I want to "hark back" slightly to Joseph Knight for the purpose of recalling a memory which should be of interest. He was one of a coterie of remarkable men who belonged to the Arundel Club in my early professional days. This club occupied the last house in Salisbury Street, Strand, overlooking the River Thames. Street

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and club were swept away in the building of the Hotel Cecil, of which they would represent about the site of its western wall. Here some of the brightest minds of London used to foregather and sit until broad daylight very often. It was a veritable company of "night-owls." One of them was "Joe" Knight himself; another, Richard Lee, dramatist, critic, and poet, who wrote *Ordeal by Touch* for Mrs. Scott Siddons (previously alluded to); and a really wonderful man named Horace Green, a great journalist. He was the model from whom Tom Robertson drew his character of Tom Styles in *Society*. His tremendous capacity may be imagined when I say that I have seen him sit at the general table at the Arundel Club practically chatting with and listening to any members around him, and at the same time writing a leading article for a newspaper, with a boy waiting downstairs to take it to the printers for next morning's issue. I believe I am right in saying that the paper was the *Times*. It is so long ago that I can't be quite sure, but I vouch for the main fact. One other extraordinary member of this circle was the actor William Belford. He was an "old-timer," had been a light comedian with Phelps at Sadler's Wells, and, in his later life, was a member of the company at the old Strand Theatre under Mrs. Swanborough. A capital actor with a fund of humour. His habits were out of the ordinary certainly. He would get up about two o'clock in the day, take his breakfast at three, get to the theatre in time for performance, have his principal meal at the Arundel after his work, and sit up until daylight, when he would go home to his bed. And when not put "out of his stride" by work he followed this

routine for years. Just in his latest days he announced with great ostentation that he had turned over a new leaf, and that he would not sit up later than when the time came to walk up Gower Street and catch the first workman's train to Bayswater, where he lived. A funny story once arose out of his habit. He had a rehearsal at the Strand Theatre on a certain day, and before leaving home, the day before, he told his landlady to call him at ten o'clock on the following morning. He pursued his usual course that evening, and the next day when called he inquired the time. His landlady replied "it was two o'clock." Jumping out of bed, "Bill" said: "What do you mean? I told you to call me at ten! I had a rehearsal at the Strand at twelve." The landlady replied meekly, "I didn't think it necessary to call you, sir. I came to your sitting-room door and saw you having your breakfast." Perfectly furious, though amused, "Bill" thundered out, "Breakfast be hanged. That was my supper!"

To retrace my steps a little. On May 2, 1905, I made my first appearance under the management of Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker at the Court. It is within the recollection of nearly every one that these gentlemen made a great and honourable record as managers and received a quite unusual amount of praise from the London Press. I honestly think they deserved it, and if I was never able to yield to the hysteria that possessed most people at the time it was not because I did not appreciate their methods and their ability, but simply because I had met a good many clever people in my life previously, and I was not quite prepared to blot from my memory all that had gone before. I am

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quite prepared to admit that Mr. Vedrenne was a model business manager, punctual, courteous, and considerate, and Mr. Granville Barker an admirable stage manager within certain limits, but so were others I could name. Indeed, I have done so in these notes. Judged by what is going on around us nowadays, I frankly admit his great excellence. I opened with them as Finch McComas in *You Never Can Tell*, by Bernard Shaw, and it was my first part in one of this amusing and clever author's plays; and after a short summer holiday I rejoined them in the autumn and played with them up to July 7, 1906. Other parts which fell to my lot were Father Dempsey (*John Bull's Other Island*), Roebuck Ramsden (*Man and Superman*), Sir Howard Hallam (*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*), all by Shaw; Samuel Jackson (*The Return of the Prodigal*, by St. John Hankin), an old man (*Electra*, Professor Gilbert Murray's translation of Euripides), Dr. Delfinos Tron (*The Youngest of the Angels*, by Maurice Hewlett). The usual system adopted at the theatre in those days was to play a new production for six *matinées* first and put it into the evening bill later. This was successful in many cases, especially with Mr. Shaw's plays, but some of the others, though highly praised and successful on their first appearance did not prove attractive to the general public when submitted to the stronger test. The company were always specially selected for the parts as far as possible, and included many of the best artists in London, and it was altogether a thoroughly cheery, artistic, and enjoyable engagement. Business was, generally speaking, fine, and the audiences were of the most refined class of playgoer. The last of the productions I played in was *Captain Brassbound's*



*Photo]*

*[Alfred Ellis and Watery*

J. H. BARNES AS FATHER DEMPSEY  
(“John Bull’s Other Island”)

*[To face page 278*





*Conversion*, which after the six *matinées* went into the evening bill and ran for twelve weeks from April 16 to July 7, 1906. In this Miss Ellen Terry played the leading female part (Lady Cicely Waynflete). I am not quite certain all the leading parts were cast with the management's customary excellent judgment. The notices were fair, and I had no cause to complain. Business good but not great. During the run, April 28, 1906, the fiftieth anniversary occurred of Miss Terry's first appearance on the stage (as a child), and a special souvenir programme was given away containing an autograph letter from her, and the autographs of all the company appended. One element of considerable anxiety arose from Miss Terry's treacherous memory. Never very good, her "study" had become apparently most indifferent about this time, and was often a source of amusement or concern to the audience and of dismay to her fellow-players. Those having scenes with her had to be constantly on the alert to reply to what she might say, and as my part was chiefly with her I passed twelve weeks with a modicum of what actors know as "first-night nervousness." At one rehearsal, I remember, Bernard Shaw demurred to her version of his lines by quaintly observing, "Well, that's not what I wrote, but I dare say it's a great deal better." But the complete explanation came later. It must be forty years since I played in or saw Tom Robertson's comedy, *Society*, but, if my memory serves me correctly, a speech therein runs something like this :—Tom Stylus speaks to Sidney Daryl, who is abstractedly thinking of his sweetheart, and gets no reply, and says (aside) : "Cupid's carriage stops the way again. Confound that nasty,

naughty, naked little boy! I wonder if he'd do less mischief if they put him into knickerbockers." How could we possibly tell that Cupid was playing havoc with Miss Terry's memory and causing all of us so much distress? Yet so it was. It was in this play she met Mr. James Carew, who became her leading man the next season, and led her to the altar a short time after that!

On June 12, 1906, occurred Miss Terry's benefit at Drury Lane, which was one of the monster affairs in the records of the British stage. Everybody did everything they could. We all joined the committee; we all acted anything (or "walked on" in anything) we were asked to. An enormous committee was formed inside and outside the profession, a splendid list of subscriptions was secured, an enormous programme lasting five hours arranged, the big theatre was packed to the doors. Caruso sang, Signora Duse (the distinguished Italian actress) joined Miss Terry on the stage at the final reception, and altogether it was a veritable gala in the fullest sense. The full receipts aggregated a magnificent sum. The three big benefits of my time on the stage were Mr. Compton's, Nellie Farren's and Miss Terry's. I am unable to remember which resulted in the largest sum, but I know they were all well over £5,000, but Mr. Compton's was supplemented by a similar compliment in Manchester following his London testimonial. Miss Terry must have been a proud and happy woman on that great day for her in 1906, which proved the enormous "hold" she had on the public as well as her own calling.

I had almost forgotten that in February 1906, being only engaged in the *matinées* at the Court, I played for



*Photo]*

*[Alfred Ellis and Walery*

J. H. BARNES AS ROEBUCK RAMSDEN

("Man and Superman")

(See page 278)

*[To face page 280*



two weeks only with Nat Goodwin at the Shaftesbury, in a play called *The Gilded Fool*. It was not successful. The notices were poor all round, and the public did not come in any number. It is a matter of regret and some surprise to me that, in his two or three attempts to win the favour of the London public, this fine actor has signally failed. I have seen him do great work on the American stage and demonstrate something very like genius at times, but possibly the parts he has selected to appear in in England have not provided scope for his undeniably great ability.

July 9, 1906, *You Never Can Tell* was very successfully revived at the Court, and I resumed my old part of McComas for a few nights up to July 26, when I terminated my engagement and left for New York July 28, by the s.s. *Philadelphia* (Captain Mills), having been selected by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones, and engaged by Mr. Charles Frohman to create an important part in the former's play of *The Hypocrites*. Of course, we had the usual concert on board for the different seamen's charities, and arrived August 4.

*The Hypocrites* was produced at the Hudson, New York, August 30, 1906, and was an enormous success from the first line to the last. The notices were really magnificent generally and personally. A good company interpreted the play, including Leslie Faber, Richard Bennett, John Glendinning, myself, Arthur Lewis, Misses Jessie Milward, Viva Birkett, Helen Tracey, Doris Keane, and others. The business was excellent, and we ran along merrily till February 23, 1907. After the New York run we had a week of "one-night stands" in New England, a week at Baltimore, two weeks at Philadelphia,

a week in northern New York, one week at Washington, and one week's return to New York (City) at the Grand Opera House. Then home again by the s.s. *Teutonic* (Captain Smith, R.N.R.), sailing May 1, arriving May 9, 1907. Again a concert on board, at which I assisted.

A complimentary dinner was given to Messrs. Vedrenne and Barker at the Criterion Restaurant on July 7, 1907, the Right Hon. the Earl of Lytton in the chair, and again I had the pleasure of being accompanied by Mrs. Barnes. I cannot say I was greatly impressed with the proceedings, which were, however, cut short through some one's oversight in not arranging for an extension of the licence of the establishment. As far as we got the speeches were dull to boredom and quite early resolved themselves into the category known as "mutual admiration society." Really the British Stage, according to the speakers, had no past history at all. All the great authors, all the great actors and actresses who had adorned it through the ages were apparently purely mythical, and the British Drama had begun about A.D. 1900. Lord Lytton succeeded in proving how little he knew about the subject. Vedrenne spoke briefly and modestly and to the point. Granville Barker cut loose and fairly let himself go. Neither Tree nor Bernard Shaw was at anything like his best, and when the arrangements (before mentioned) brought about an earlier departure than had been planned, no one seemed loath to leave. The further proceedings, as arranged, were printed and supplied in the form of a pamphlet. I remember an early play of Sir Arthur Pinero's in which the curtain was brought down very effectively on one act by a character rushing in and shouting: "They

have cut off the gas!" I was reminded of it. I am doing myself a great injustice if my remarks on this event should appear, in any way, inimical to Vedrenne and Barker. For both of them I feel a personal regard amounting to affection and for their work profound respect and admiration, but with my reverence for many big artists and plays that have gone before, I *do* feel that enthusiasm for what *is* becomes of even greater worth if reasonably tempered with honour for what *has been*.

August 27, 1907, *The Hypocrites* was produced in London at the Hicks (now called the Globe) with several of the New York cast, Leslie Faber, myself, Arthur Lewis, Miss Doris Keane (who has since become a very successful American star), and Miss Viva Birkett, the new names embracing those of Misses Marion Terry, Henrietta Watson, Mrs. Leslie Faber, Vernon Steel, Charles V. France, Alfred Bishop, Fred Grove, and others. The play did not go as well in England, and I venture to think that in some points the author's ideas were not as faithfully reproduced, which caused the pathetic nature of the story, in some of the scenes, to appear too grimly painful. It only ran six weeks, till October 11. At the time I received a beautifully-bound copy of the play from Mr. Jones with a most complimentary and gratifying appreciation of my work therein over his own autograph.

November 6, 1907, by a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* on the subject of censorship of plays I joined in the lively controversy then raging in the London Press on the subject. In the late part of 1907 I had a most pleasant literary success. Current events on the stage



had inspired me with the notion that the time had come for some one who had expert knowledge to endeavour to counteract some of the errors which had crept—and were creeping—into the actor's calling in many directions, and I conceived the idea of three articles on Acting, Play-writing, and the Dramatic Press to illustrate what I wanted to say, and what I honestly believed ought to be said. I wrote the first of these articles, and sent it to an important daily paper. It came back, set up in type, as slightly proving to me its value, but with certain suggestions for alterations and other conditions which I could not accept, and I asked for its return. I then sent it (under advice) to Sir James Knowles (Editor of the *Nineteenth Century and After*), whom I did not know and never met, and, to my great delight, I got a letter in a few days accepting the contribution, and it appeared in that magazine within two months (February 1908). In due course I received a most useful cheque in payment, accompanied by a request that I would submit to the Editor any other article I might write on similar subjects. The article appeared under the title of "The Drama of To-Day and the Public's Attitude Thereto," and in September 1908, the second of the series came out in the same magazine, entitled "An Actor's Views on Plays and Play-writing." The third and last of the articles, called "The Drama and Dramatic Press," was duly finished, but, alas ! my friend Sir James Knowles had died (without my having even made his acquaintance), and the editorship of the magazine had fallen into other hands. Whether my third effort was inferior to the other two (I don't think it proved so) or whether the question of the Press was too dangerous

a ground for a young or new editor to venture on I know not, but it was refused, and afterwards published in a professional weekly paper, October 16 and 30, 1909. These articles were freely quoted, discussed, and commented on in London, all over England, and even in some Continental papers, and the then manager of the paper in question suggested that it would be a good thing for the profession at large to collect the three and re-issue them as a pamphlet. To this I cheerfully assented, and having obtained the consent of the editor of the *Nineteenth Century and After*, the brochure duly appeared. I cannot say its reception was flattering. Its sale was most limited.

February 27, 1908, witnessed the first production at the Comedy of a play called *Lady Barbarity*, adapted from J. C. Snaith's novel of the same name by R. C. Carton, and in which Miss Marie Tempest played the title-part delightfully, and such as Allan Aynesworth, Graham Browne, myself, W. H. Day, Misses Lena Halliday, and Dora Barton supported her. Notices poor. Business indifferent. Run finished April 11, 1908.

May 19 I played Dr. Delaney in *Sweet Lavender* at a *matinée* at the Playhouse for the Veterans' Relief Fund, and received through Lieut.-Col. Marshall-West the thanks of that distinguished soldier, Lord Roberts.

From May 25 to June 20, 1908, I was on a "flying *matinée*" tour with Mr. Seymour Hicks, playing the Reverend Mr. Floyd (*Sweet and Twenty*) and the Ghost of Jacob Marley (*Scrooge*). We went all over the country playing, in most places, to very fine business indeed.

August 31, 1908, I made my first appearance at the

London Hippodrome in *The Sands of Dee*, a sketch, by Alicia Ramsay and Rudolph de Cordova, with a tremendous water effect of an incoming wave, invented and produced by Frank Parker. It was a curious experience to find myself playing with the audience practically all round me. This sketch was done in the centre arena before the alterations in the building, and it terminated by the sinking of the floor and the flooding of the centre tank to a depth of 5 ft. I got used to it quickly though, and liked the work. The sketch was a huge success, and ran fifteen weeks in London, and then went to the Manchester Hippodrome for five weeks, December 21, 1908, and Liverpool (Olympia) for five weeks, February 1, 1909. Mr. Norman Trevor, Mr. Lawson Butt, and Miss Ruth Maitland were my comrades. How the latter managed to endure six months of complete immersions up to her neck in water practically twice a day, I shall never cease to wonder. During my engagement in Liverpool I witnessed my first "Waterloo Cup." Three splendid days' sport.

### XXX

IN November, 1908, very many in the dramatic profession were greatly pleased to read of the special honour bestowed upon Sir Anderson Critchett by King Edward. Known to the general public as the King's oculist, his baronetcy had not any very special meaning, but to many artists in our calling it meant a great deal, being a brother of one of the most popular dramatic authors (Mr. R. C. Carton), and to every one with whom he was brought in contact, the kindest and most considerate of men. For myself, I had known his good father (from whom he inherited his kindly disposition), his uncle and his father-in-law (Mr. C. Dunphie, the distinguished dramatic critic of the *Morning Post*), whilst his brother and I have been firm friends for many years. I could not let the event pass without a few lines of sincere congratulation, to which I received the most charming reply November 18, 1908. On the occasion of a memorial *matinée* to Ristori at His Majesty's I was asked to write a few lines of tribute to her for a daily paper, which I did November 28. And I also wrote in *The Stage*, November 26, 1908, a reply to some remarks of Miss Ellen Terry's about myself, in the book of her life, published about that time. This reply was largely quoted and commented on. After my engagement with *The Sands of Dee* terminated in Liverpool I made an entirely

new departure by accepting an offer of a regular music-hall engagement to give some recitations at the Palace, Manchester, March 8, 1909, and the Metropolitan, Edgware Road, April 12, 1909. At both places the audiences were demonstrative in my favour, and I was assured by both managers and agents that I was distinctly successful, but I could not get anything like continuous dates as bookings, except in the dim distance, so I gave up the project with some regret, as it was work I was always fond of.

May 7, 1909, I appeared for the *Daily Mail* Cabmen's Fund in a benefit promoted by Mr. Seymour Hicks under the patronage of the Duke of Rutland, Lords Rosebery, Shrewsbury, and Cork, and Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, at the Aldwych. It was a good programme, and a very full house. My part of the entertainment consisted of studying and reciting some five or six stanzas of verse, entitled "To a London Cabby," by "Touchstone," a writer on the staff of the *Daily Mail*. This I did, surrounded by a bevy of London cabmen, some of their children, and an amiable bull-dog. I enjoyed doing it thoroughly, and have often been astonished since, when walking the streets of London, to receive a greeting or salute from one or other of the good, cheery fellows who were in that group, and who never seem to forget the little service I rendered. Poor chaps! I am afraid their case has gone "from bad to worse" since then, and the all-conquering "taxi" has very nearly rendered their calling a thing of the past.

September 1, 1909, saw the production at the Globe of the adaptation from the French of the play *Madame*

X, which had been such an enormous success in New York. It was stage-managed by Mr. Dion Boucicault with great care, and a fine array of names appeared in the cast: Sydney Valentine, Arthur Wontner, G. W. Anson, O. P. Heggie, C. M. Hallard, Frank Cooper, Herbert Ross, Edmund Gwenn, myself, Alfred Brydone, Cyril Harcourt, Lena Ashwell, Elsie Chester, and others. The Press notices were fair, as was the business for the run, which was nine weeks only. Miss Ashwell played the leading part finely. Arthur Wontner enhanced his position on the London stage very much by his performance as the son delivering the great speech in the trial scene with admirable effect. I played the judge (in that scene only). Frank Cooper (and, after he left, C. M. Hallard in his part), Sydney Valentine, Edmund Gwenn, Alfred Brydone, Miss Elsie Chester, all scored successes. I left one week before the run terminated to go to the Adelphi to play in Charles Rann Kennedy's powerful play entitled *The Servant in the House*, which had also been a huge success in America. It was a play of a similar nature to *The Passing of the Third Floor Back*, but of much stronger and coarser fibre. Its first night was October 25. Some of the scenes and dialogue were even slangy in their strength, but I honestly thought (as many others did) that it was a great play if not a work of genius. However, it did not prove very successful and only ran four weeks. I dare say its socialistic theories were against it, and indeed they did not appeal to me. But that was a point which I did not consider in forming my opinion of it as a play. It was a small but specially selected cast: Guy Standing, Sydney Valentine, Ben

Field, myself, and the favourite and excellent American actor, Henry Miller, Miss Edith Wynne Matthison, and Miss Gladys Wynne. The general notices were mixed for the play, excellent for the actors, but the parts were all good and gave the company fine opportunities. I think the author made a considerable mistake in making a very confident and self-assertive speech on the first night. The play had apparently gone so well that he was tempted into this extravagance, a proceeding which, in my judgment, is much to be deprecated. It may savour of foggydom if I state that in my early days on the stage a very absolute rule existed in every properly conducted theatre forbidding any one to address the audience under penalty of immediate dismissal. Our predecessors had found out the error of it and established a custom which nowadays is "more honoured in the breach than the observance." During the run we were visited by a large number of prominent socialists, including Lady Warwick; and the Labour members of Parliament (to whom the story strongly appealed) were much in evidence. Amongst them Mr. Keir Hardie, who introduced himself to me one night, in talking about the play, and was quite astonished to learn from me that I held views diametrically opposed to his.

February 10, 1910, I played Father Joseph (*Richelieu*) with a gentleman named Robert Hilton at the re-named Strand Theatre, and had one of the most unpleasant experiences of my whole career. According to this person's story, he had been promised good financial assistance, but promises did not justify him in taking a theatre and engaging a large company without the



*Photo]*

*[Alfred Ellis and Walery*

J. H. BARNES AS FATHER JOSEPH  
(“Richelieu”)

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money in hand, and, after playing three nights and a *matinée*, it transpired there were no funds to pay the treasury on Saturday. Scenes of great distress occurred and even violence was threatened. I was able to help one or two bad cases a trifle, but I could not make myself responsible for much, and the theatre closed summarily. I certainly got my salary for the time we played, after waiting some weeks, but, as I had rehearsed a fortnight and shown the person in question nearly all he knew about *Richelieu* and, relying on his promises of a three months' engagement, I had given up negotiations in another direction, which would have given me ten weeks' income, payment for four performances was not a very good equivalent. The man declared himself a bankrupt shortly afterwards, and most of the company, including its most needy members, did not get a penny. The Press were not kind to him or his acting, and the public were not enticed to witness it in any number.

In Sir Herbert Tree's (he had received his knighthood by now) Shakespearean Festival at His Majesty's, one performance was given by Lewis Waller and his company of *Henry V.*, and I resumed my old part of Williams, April 21, 1910.

May 2, 1910, at the Shakespeare, Liverpool, was produced an American play called *The Dawn of a Tomorrow*, in which Miss Gertrude Elliott played the leading part surrounded by a good company. I had a very small part. The notices were fine all round, and the business excellent up to the Friday. On Saturday morning all England was mourning the death of our good King Edward VII. No business could be thought of. The theatre was closed—when two fine

houses were assured—and we returned to London, May 7. The play opened at the Garrick, London, May 13, and was quite fairly noticed by the Press, and the business was moderately good. Of course, the theatre closed May 20, the date of the King's funeral. From the Garrick it was removed to the Duke of York's, and ran on for some weeks. The *People*, May 15, 1910, contained a scrap of mine, the theme of which was "The King is dead !! God save the King !!!"

For some time a very decided movement has been in the air, having for its object the establishment of a Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre. My scepticism as to its fulfilment has led to considerable misapprehension as regards my views. No one would rejoice more than myself to see such a scheme brought to a successful issue, but I doubt, firstly, if the money required can be raised; and, secondly, the possible character of its directorate? To perpetuate some of the crying evils at present extant would be a very positive national disgrace. I shall explain my meaning a little later. On June 7, 1910, I attended a special meeting of the Kensington Committee of the movement held at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey Baring, 195, Queen's Gate, S.W. Sir John Hare presided, and the principal speaker in favour of the scheme was Forbes-Robertson. He was most fervent and eloquent, and I stated that I was only too ready to agree with him if his views could be carried out. It was rather a coincidence that in a letter I had written to the Press some days prior to this meeting I had suggested that the one name to place at the head of a National Theatre to commemorate the name of

Shakespeare was that of Johnston Forbes-Robertson. With his announced retirement I suppose that is now impossible. More's the pity for the scheme, if it ever goes through.

September 27, 1910, I commenced an engagement with Mr. George Alexander at the St. James's in a play called *D'Arcy of the Guards*, a very pretty story of the American War of Independence, with scenes laid in and around Philadelphia. It had been a great success in America and was brought to London, and arrangements made for its production by Mr. Henry Miller, the previous year. In it Mr. Alexander played (I think) his first Irish part, an officer in the Foot Guards. All the men were soldiers. I played the pleasant part of the Regimental Doctor. Miss Evelyn D'Alroy looked divine in her powdered wig, which became her to admiration. She played charmingly, as did Miss Margery Maude as an ingénue. There were several performances in the play above the average. The notices were from fair to very good, but there was a weakness somewhere, and it was only mildly successful, finishing its run November 12.

It was followed, November 19, by a light comedy called *Eccentric Lord Comberdene*, by R. C. Carton. George Alexander played the title part in his best manner. Miss Compton was, as she always is, excellent in one of those parts her husband (the author) so cleverly fits her with, and a lot of good artists lent efficient help, such as A. Royston, Athol Stewart, Fred Lewis, Lyton Lyle, myself, T. Weguelin, Vivian Reynolds, Gerald Ames, Misses Rita Jolivet, Ruth Maitland, and Margerie Waterlow. The play was full of the delicate

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humour and charm for which the author is famous, but for some inscrutable reason it just missed success, and in spite of praise from the Press, a beautiful production and every possible chance, it fell somewhat flat, and ended its run January 21, 1911. At a very full afternoon's entertainment given by that most admirable charity, the Theatrical Ladies' Guild, at Kensington Town Hall, February 24, 1911, I recited at one of the concerts and acted as Bell-man in making announcements in the Large Hall.

March 20, appeared at the London Hippodrome as President of the Hampton Club in Seymour Hicks's adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's novel; a terribly weird and grim story of a coterie of men who decide by cards which of their number shall commit suicide—a play of the nature brought into prominence by the Grande Guignol in Paris. In this play Seymour Hicks, himself, gave a most vivid and (as I think) a great performance.

April 20. Went to Steinway Hall to a concert given by Hayden Coffin and Maurice Farkoa, when the former sang a song entitled "Kent." Music by Colon McAlpin : Lyric by the writer.

## XXXI

ON April 20, 1911, a comedy called *Better Not Enquire* was produced at the Prince of Wales's by Charles Hawtrey, who engaged me for a capital part of a gay old Frenchman. The play was an adaptation from the French by Gladys Unger. The notices were not good and the business was only fair, but we were a cheery company. Good nature and good humour radiated from our "star," who is one of the most delightful men to work with, as well as one of the very best actors in the world, when he has a part worthy of his powers. Our run was about thirteen weeks, to July 20. Besides Hawtrey and the writer, the company consisted of Holman Clark, Gerald Ames, T. Weguelin, Hubert Druce, C. B. Vaughan, Misses Marie Löhr, Vane Featherston, Hilda Moore, and a pretty little actress named Enid Leslie, who seems to have dropped out of sight, I am told, through ill-health.

It was during this engagement that the never-to-be-forgotten Command Performance took place at Drury Lane in honour of the German Emperor and Empress, May 17. Their Imperial Majesties being in London for the occasion of the unveiling of the statue to Queen Victoria in front of Buckingham Palace, our King arranged for this entertainment as part of the festivities; and the Emperor having expressed a wish

to see one of the standard plays of the language, Lord Lytton's *Money* was chosen and presented with a cast embracing all the very best names of the London Stage, and those for whom parts could not be found walked on as supers in the club scene, etc. I was fortunate enough to get a few lines as one of the tradesmen in Evelyn's house—one Tabouret, an upholsterer. It was a marvellous night and a sight of bewildering magnificence from the stage. The grand old theatre, specially and handsomely decorated, and the brilliant uniforms of the foreign and British officers as well as the concourse of society men and women—the latter in their handsomest gowns and ablaze with jewels—made up a setting for the Imperial and Royal party the like of which I had never seen and never expected to again, and yet it was destined that within a few weeks I was to see another almost, if not quite, as remarkable. The event described above reflected the highest possible credit on Mr. Arthur Collins and all those who worked with him to bring about such a superb consummation; and then came Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's turn. Our Gracious King George V. had signified his intention to do honour to that section of his subjects, the ever loyal actors, by a command performance at His Majesty's and Sir Herbert threw himself heart and soul into the scheme. The theatre was splendidly decorated under the artistic direction of Mr. Percy Macquoid. A monster programme was arranged this time of various items, which included Act II of Sheridan's *The Critic*, in which I played the Becfeater. Again all the profession found some niche for their services—great or small, it did not matter. A special poetic masque was one of the enter-

tainments, and again the theatre was a sight of the utmost splendour as seen from the stage. There were not so many foreign uniforms visible, though a good number, worn by the military attachés of the various Embassies, but our British Army makes a gallant showing in full dress, and the English public can hold its own with any in the world when it turns out in force either by day or evening. On both the occasions mentioned all boxes and seats were at a great premium, the receipts were enormous, as, of course, were the expenses, but a large sum remained over, in each case, to be divided among the theatrical charities. By the second performance a new Fund was started which is known as the "King George's Pension Fund," and one of the first to benefit by it is that admirable artist and thoroughly worthy lovable old comrade, Mr. Harry Paulton.

When the season closed at the Prince of Wales's, July 20, I spent a delightful holiday with my people and a relative at Dieppe, though the heat of that summer was so abnormal that the middle part of most days was passed lying under the trees in as little clothing as decency permitted. We had a little house on the outskirts of the town which permitted us to enjoy as much of the gaiety of this piquant resort as we liked, and, at the same time, we saw quite a little of the more sedate side of French life. Two things struck me very forcibly: First, the extraordinary thrift and genial politeness of the peasantry, market-gardeners, etc., and second, the remarkable enthusiasm and esprit of the soldiery (we were very near a large barracks). From what I observed, I should think the renaissance of the French Army is a very solid fact.



After this pleasant time in new environment I returned to London to rehearse for Sir Herbert Tree's production of *Macbeth*, in which I played Banquo. It was first played on September 5, 1911, and ran till December 13. The notices were good, generally and personally, and the business was enormous for a long time. All will remember the sumptuous character of this revival. In my wildest dreams of *Macbeth* I had imagined nothing like it. J. Comyns Carr acted as artistic adviser in the matter and did his work well. If I said that the performance wiped out my former impressions of the acting play, I should not be writing the truth, and those who knew me, as well as those who have paid me the compliment of reading these reminiscences, would know I was a humbug: which I am not! For Sir Herbert Tree I have nothing but sincere regard. A delightful companion, humorous and witty, a splendid host, and the best all-round character actor I have seen in my time, I cannot, however, say that his Shakespearean performances have supplanted in my mind some of those I have seen before. Yet he is always more than interesting, and there were moments in his *Macbeth* so fine that if I had my time to come over again and were again called on to play the part, I should certainly copy him. I recall one very notable scene, with Lady Macbeth after the murder of Duncan, in which he reached real greatness. But as a whole it left me cold and inclined to retrospection. Mr. Bourchier's Macduff, too, had the same effect. Here is another artist who has done some very fine character work in play after play at the Garrick and a performance I shall refer to directly. But his readings at times are

so diametrically opposed to all I have ever learned and practised that the only honest course for me to take is to "agree to differ." And this brings me back to the suggestion I hinted at in my previous remarks about a National Theatre. Without the slightest reference to any one, individually, I venture to assert that many grave errors have crept into the reading of blank verse. Indeed, they abound in profusion. Beyond all question the traditions of Shakespearian reading were conveyed pretty directly from the author's time down to the last half of the nineteenth century, through a sequence of great actors; and the effect, on an attuned ear, of rendering his glorious verse in the spirit of modern prose can only be to lessen its effect and make it commonplace. Of course, on the French stage the traditions, as bearing on the works of the old dramatists, are carefully preserved and insisted on. Even too much so! Heaven forbid that Shakespeare's verse should ever be delivered in the intoned manner adopted by the tragedians of France (though they, doubtless, would insist on its correctness). What we want in England (and always had till recently) is a happy medium. There is no need to go far for an example. The standard for delivering blank verse is, in my judgment, that set by Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson; that is the method of elocution and reading which should be a part of the equipment of every Shakespearian actor of every rank, and that is the standard which should be the absolute objective point of a national Shakespeare Memorial Theatre if it ever arrives. The question is who is to teach it and to insist on it as far as possible? To get back to *Macbeth*. Miss Violet

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Vanbrugh did extremely well as Lady Macbeth. Her sleep-walking scene—which had a wonderfully effective setting—was much above the average. Basil Gill was a good Malcolm and A. E. George, Miss Frances Dillon and Ross Shore were effective witches. The Lady Macduff scene, from the text, was introduced for the first time in many years, but though well played by Miss Viva Birkett, did not prove of much value to the play. The last act was perhaps the weakest point in the performance, and the fight was really poor. Its arrangement was entrusted to a young gentleman who knew nothing about the play and who did not realise that what is effective in a school-of-arms may not prove so on the stage. The fight in Macbeth has points of drama in it which are of far greater consequence than the mere clash of swords, and there is a world of dramatic effect in it when properly carried out.

Mention of the name of Miss Vanbrugh reminds me that possibly we came of the same stock in the distant past. Of course, it is known her name is the same as mine, and she herself has told me that her family came from Oxfordshire, my native county, where my people could be traced in one parish for more than two hundred and fifty years. Some old relatives of mine, who have little else to do but find out such things, have told me that beyond all question our ancestors were of the same family. I hope it is true. It would be no small pleasure in life to know that one could claim ever so slight a kinship with two such charming and talented ladies as herself and her sister.

During the run of *Macbeth* we rehearsed and produced for three *matinées* and one night a play by Mr.

Israel Zangwill, entitled *The War God*. Like all the work of this very clever man, it was full of good things; indeed I have often taken the book he gave me down from its shelf at home and thoroughly enjoyed some of the fine writing it contains. The notices were not good, and it did not prove attractive. I fear it must be classed in the category of what are known as "dreamer's plays." Who was it said: "A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world"?

Beyond all question, Mr. Zangwill's imagination reached a very high altitude in *The War God*, and it was a pity it was not seen by a greater number of the public. In this play Mr. Bouchier gave perhaps the best performance of his life. As Count Torgrim, the Chancellor of a supposititious kingdom—a character evidently suggested by the life and work of Bismarck—he was positively great. Proud, austere, masterful, scheming by turns and pathetic on occasion, he touched all chords in the gamut of emotion with a master hand, and had the play run he would have enhanced his reputation immensely by his very fine delineation. Tree played the secondary part of Count Frithiof, which was certainly fashioned on the career of Count Tolstoi, and he, too, scored a success in a lesser degree. A. E. George was very effective as one Brog, a revolutionary; Basil Gill's fine voice was heard to advantage as Osric, the hero; Miss Lillah McCarthy was picturesque and forceful as the Lady Norna, and the rest of us, including Charles Maude, myself, Moss Shore, Gerald Lawrence, Misses Laura Cowie and Clara Greet, lent our best help in more or less visionary characters.

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November 26, 1911, a complimentary dinner was given to Mr. George Edwardes at the Savoy Hotel, with Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the chair, to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of his career as a London manager. It was a splendid gathering, and there I had the great pleasure of meeting, after many years, that fine artist Charles Santley, one of the greatest vocalists the world ever produced; perhaps as a singer of baritone ballads the absolute best. I had known him in my early days at the old Gaiety, when he sang in *Zampa*, etc., and his greeting of me was cordial in the extreme. He sang two ballads in honour of his old friend George Edwardes, and showed that years had only impaired his voice a little and his art not a jot. More than one popular singer present rubbed their eyes in astonishment at the wonderful and "grand old man."

January 7, 1912, I took part in the Dickens Centenary Celebration at the Coliseum, promoted and arranged by Seymour Hicks and Mr. Oswald Stoll. It was held on a Sunday evening, and consisted entirely of acts, scenes, and tableaux from the works of that popular author. Nearly all the profession joined in some part of the entertainment, and the immense auditorium was packed from floor to ceiling. The proceeds were handed to some members of the great novelist's family who were in reduced circumstances.

January 20, March 16, April 13, 1912, articles of mine appeared in the London Press on the following subjects: "A Working Actor on Macbeth," "An Actor on 'The Miracle,'" and "The Reading of Shakespeare."

An ambitious play by Mr. E. G. Hemmerde, K.C.,

was produced at the Aldwych, March 12, 1912. It was called *Proud Maisie*, and was a modern blank-verse effort dealing with incidents in Scotland at the period of Bonnie Prince Charlie. It is a curious but well-established fact that plays written around this character have never succeeded. It is difficult to understand why. His were stirring times, full of incident, chivalry and loyalty, but apparently not lending themselves to dramatic success, and *Proud Maisie* was no exception. The theatre was nominally under the management of a Mr. Archdeacon, but in reality was controlled and financed by Sir Joseph Beecham; therefore everything was done on the most liberal scale. Beautiful scenery, exceptionally gorgeous old Scottish costumes, and a fine cast; John Bardsley, the operatic tenor, sang a tuneful ballad. Real Scotch dances were executed, a good fencing bout arranged. Miss Alexandra Carlisle played the title-part to admiration. Henry Ainley was romantic and virile. Ben Webster, myself, Leon Quartermane, Norman Trevor, poor Blake Adams, and Miss Madge Fabian all succeeded in our parts, according to the newspapers. But the business was very disappointing. I am afraid there is no doubt it was a poor play.

May 11, 1912, I started on a five weeks' tour with Robert Loraine, playing my old part of Roebuck Ramsden (*Man and Superman*). We visited Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, and Liverpool, giving one *matinée* at Edinburgh. The Press were unanimous in our favour, and we played to good houses. My next engagement was a return to the St. James's for that curious play *Turandot*, January 18, 1913. This had

been a wonderful success in Germany, and was as picturesque and unique as could be imagined, dealing as it did with old China. The scenery was lovely, and the dresses marvels of richness, but, alas ! the play was hopeless. When the MS. reached England and was translated it appeared to contain a great deal of matter so coarse as to be quite unplayable in London, and although we were given nearly carte blanche in the matter of discreet gags it was absolutely impossible to make it go, and it came to an end in four weeks. The Press cut it up badly, and the business was very poor indeed. Another version of this extraordinary play, called *A Thousand Years Ago*, has been tried in the United States, with nearly the same result. In the London cast were Edward Sass, myself, Vivian Reynolds, Fred Lewis, Norman Forbes, Godfrey Tearle, James Berry, Misses Evelyn d'Alroy, Maire O'Neill, Margery Tarde, Margaret Chute. Some of Edward Sass's interpolated lines were very humorous.

February 12, 1913, *Theatreland* reprinted my poem, entitled, "The Broken Melody," for the following significant reason. Nearly twenty years before I had written this scrap at the request of August van Biene at the time he acquired and made a great success with a play of the same name. He suggested that if I could supply the lyric for a song he would set it to music and, if successful, it might have a sale on its merits as well as help to advertise his play. I did so, and I suppose I over-wrote it. At all events, he was good enough to say it was too much of a poem for his purpose. It was reprinted more than once in the interim, but it was rather an extraordinary coincidence that in the third verse I

practically described the absolute manner of my old friend's death, as it occurred all those years after. Hence its reproduction at the time stated.

February 15, 1913, the weekly *Scotsman* printed a long article on myself and my career, with a portrait, and pleasant allusions to my old days in Edinburgh. With Scotsmen "once a friend always a friend." Their loyalty is marvellous : they never forget.

February 23, 1913, I was a guest with Henry Ainley and Miss Haidee Wright at the Gallery First Nighters' Club, at which I spoke in response to the toast of my health and finished up with a short recitation.



## XXXII

ON Saturday, March 22, 1913, Forbes-Robertson commenced his farewell performances at Drury Lane, in *Hamlet*, and invited me to resume my old part (Polonius) with him. Whilst sharing a dressing-room with his brother, Norman Forbes, at the St. James's in January, the latter had made the casual remark, "I don't believe they want my brother, or his plays, in London, but he only intends to lose just so much money." What happened is quite modern history and common knowledge. How the theatre was besieged by crowds night after night, week after week, to witness, not only *Hamlet*, but nearly all the plays in his repertory. How the records of the theatre, as regards receipts, were equalled, and (I was told) exceeded, and the nightly demonstrations of respect and affection for our foremost actor are amongst the happiest incidents of the modern stage. The Press on *Hamlet*, generally, and to me personally, were as favourable as ever. The business continued enormous for nearly the whole of the eleven weeks, and our star's banking account must have been very substantially increased, where a loss was considered possible. I was only engaged for Polonius, but through a disappointment in the case of a gentleman who had engaged to play Iago, I undertook that part at a short notice (May 19, and twice afterwards), with every evi-



*Photo]*

*[“ The Daily Mirror ”*

SIR JOHNSTON FORBES-ROBERTSON AS HAMLET AND J. H. BARNES  
AS POLONIUS

*[To face page 306*



dence of satisfaction to the public. Almost in the last days of the engagement the announcement was made that his King had made him *Sir* Johnston Forbes-Robertson. Never was a theatrical knighthood more welcome or popular. And then came the last night and final farewell, June 6, 1913, when the prices of seats were raised, the theatre was thronged to its utmost capacity, and hundreds were unable to obtain seats. In a speech of feeling, dignity and charm, but free from maudlin sentiment, he alluded to his new-found honour and his old-time respect and love for his friends, the public, and the curtain fell, as far as London was concerned, on a career as honest and earnest as can be found in the annals of the British stage. A number of his personal friends and associates met him by invitation on the stage for a last handshake, a parting glass, and a sincere wish for his welfare, in which his popular and gentle wife was heartily included, and "there was an end."

After this I joined him in the curious experience of being filmed for moving pictures in *Hamlet*, when we rather opened the eyes of the good folks of Walton-on-Thames by literally walking across and about the streets in our costumes and grease paint, looking like Red Indians or worse. And, now, before taking leave of this fine artist and valued friend, I am going to cross swords with him on one point. A short time ago I read a most optimistic opinion of his as to the present condition of the British stage, and I also read an open letter from Mr. Henry Arthur Jones combating his contention. I am not always in accord with the views of the latter gentleman, but in this case I range myself

unreservedly on his side. Sir Johnston's life of sincerity of purpose would clearly denote that he thoroughly believes what he says. That being so, may it be suggested that he speaks from the platform of success, which has come to him in recent years, and in which every individual who knows him (or of him) rejoices.

I am never afraid to face facts, and have no desire "to sail under false colours." Any one reading between the lines of these, my recollections, could hardly fail to notice that the last decade of my career has not been as successful as the former ones, and "times" have not been as good. This may have made me pessimistic, but I don't think so, and I desire to place on record my decidedly opposite opinion to his. I see a stage where our great Shakespeare is over-embellished and under-acted, and often very faultily read—where the scene painter and upholsterer triumph to the exclusion of the poet's fancy, his immortal lines, and colossal studies of human nature. I have seen Sir Johnston himself have a great difficulty in getting members of his own company to give adequate emphasis and meaning to the author's lines. I see a stage from which romance and charm are almost entirely banished, where filthy, sordid, realistic, ugly so-called problems, neither amusing, ennobling nor interesting (except to a very few advanced thinkers), are (slightly to paraphrase the bard himself),

"Like a mildew'd ear  
Blasting a wholesome nation,"

pervverting the young and disgusting the old, and so deadly dull as to kill the theatre habit among the public—plays to which no decent parents would take their

young people; thereby excluding all that section of playgoers.—Theatres opening one week to shut up next! Actors rehearsing four and five weeks, very often to get one or two weeks' salary, and three-fifths of the English actors of force and character driven abroad to get a living. I could furnish a list of these, from my own knowledge, which could hardly fail to convince the most sceptical. These are facts as I observe them. Let who will differ from me.

And now I enter on my "last lap." August 2, 1913, I left Southampton on the s.s. *New York* for a tour in the U.S. of the Drury Lane drama *The Whip*. We opened in Chicago August 30, and played there eight weeks. When I look back and remember Chicago as I first knew it and see it now it seems unbelievable. The public spirit of the place which has brought about the transformation must have been gigantic. Where I can recall wooden pavements about as level as a switch-back railway, barren, ugly prairies and treeless deserts, I now find splendid streets, magnificent public (as well as business) buildings, perfect pavements, and glorious parks studded with lakes and wooded islands, public bathing-houses, public golf links, and tennis grounds, each and all created out of a wilderness. I am told that the very latest enterprise of this truly wonderful city is to put the ugly railway on the lake front out of sight in some way, carry a bridge over the river, and finally have a majestic boulevard on this same lake front fifteen miles in length, extending from Evanston at the north to the southern extremity of Jackson Park at the south.

From Chicago to Boston, November 1, 1913, where we

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played thirteen weeks. Boston (always charming to the Englishman), with its interesting old Colonial landmarks, its splendid institutions, its public library with mural decorations by Sargent, Abbey, and others; its beautiful Opera House and Art Museum, its Symphony Hall, where the Boston Symphony Orchestra, led by Dr. Karl Muck (of the Imperial Opera, Berlin) would "charm the birds off the trees." Everywhere good taste and comfort, especially in the fine hotels, amongst which may be mentioned the Bellevue, owned and managed by a "Man of Kent" (a Mr. Harvey, son of the inventor of the "Harvey" torpedo), with many of our countrymen among the staff, including one or two old soldiers of the British Army.

From Boston to New York for two weeks, February 16. New York, which some of its citizens claim "is the most wonderful city in the world." In some respects they would appear to be right. It seems to have absorbed the gaiety and advanced ideas of every other prominent community in the world. Presumably, there is hidden away somewhere in New York a domestic life, but one is never cognizant of it. Everywhere is evidence of the "mighty dollar" and the most strenuous pursuit of pleasure. The money spent daily on costly and luxurious enjoyment must be too fabulous to contemplate.

On to Philadelphia March 7. "Sleepy old Philadelphia" some of the forward Americans call it. Maybe; but to me it is one of the most charming cities in the Union, and I have always thought so. I love its magnificent Fairmount Park, its old-world characteristics, and even its narrow streets and red-brick pavements,

carrying the mind back to the days "when all the world was young" to us, and its sense of calm, comfortable, well-off respectability. Nor is this feeling of secure wealthy complaisance without good basis. I wonder how many of the gigantic, ostentatious projects of the West have been formulated and financed and owned in the sedate but handsomely housed trust companies of Philadelphia. We played there seven weeks, and I experienced any amount of most kindly hospitality. It is a city of delightful clubs, the Union League, the Racquet, the new Manufacturers' (a most wonderful all-marble structure), and last, but by no means least, the charming Art Club, one of the very nicest, cosiest, and tasteful semi-Bohemian clubs in the world. Here good-fellowship abounds, radiating from its President. John Howard McFadden. Known to his friends on both sides of the Atlantic as the Cotton King, he is a many-sided man in the true sense of the word. There are many fine collections of pictures and objects of art owned amongst the wealthy men of Philadelphia. This is the present home of Rembrandt's "The Mill"; also the celebrated "Madonna," by Raphael, known in Europe as the "Cooper" Madonna, recently purchased from the famous Lansdowne collection for an enormous sum. Both of them are housed with other great works in the veritable palace of Mr. Widener, which is a positive storehouse of treasures. There are several other valuable collections in the city, but I have never derived greater pleasure from the contemplation of pictures than from those owned by John McFadden. There are not a great number, about thirty or forty—all gems of the great English School. Two Hogarths, several,



Raeburns, seven Romneys, a glorious Gainsborough, an equally splendid Turner, a George Morland, an Old Crome, "Blacksmith Shop," the best Harlow I have ever seen, and as fine an example of Constable as (I believe) there is in the world. This last picture has quite a history. It was sent to Lisle to an exhibition about the year 1824 or 1826, and on its return to England was held in pawn at the port of entry through the inability of the painter to pay the accrued costs or expenses of £14. It was eventually taken out of custody by a man named Silcock, and after many vicissitudes found its way to its present abiding-place. Called "Stour Lock," it is a magnificent specimen which "makes one's mouth water." The great charm of McFadden's collection to me is that they are not exhibited in a gallery with a lot of inferior specimens, but, beautifully preserved, they are tastefully hung and splendidly lighted in the living rooms of his fine house in Rittenhouse Square, so that he, his family, and his friends move always in this gloriously artistic atmosphere. What a luxury! Nor does Mr. McFadden spend all of his great wealth on his own personal pleasures or fancies. Descended from John Howard, a man famous in the annals of medical research in the last century (which he conducted at his own expense), he has inherited the same desire to benefit his fellow-creatures. He is prime mover in, and sole supporter of, "The John Howard McFadden Cancer Research," which is carried on by his assistants the Messrs. Ross, in a laboratory in connection with the Lister Institute, near Chelsea Bridge, in London, and "a little bird has whispered me" that great results are looming in the near future. He

has written an article on this topic, which was printed in the *Nineteenth Century and After*. Add to this a genial manner and presence and a thoroughly kindly and friendly nature, and it may be gathered that he is, distinctly, a man to know !

And here ends my task. With my face turned towards home, the dear home folk, and the friends I love in "Old England," I lay down my pen. To those of my readers who are my contemporaries in our calling my affectionate heartfelt regard. To the younger members of our great and noble profession I wish all good-luck, with just a scrap of advice by slightly altering Addison's line in the play of *Cato*—

'Tis not in *actors* to command success : But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it.

To that greater public, outside, the profound respect of an ever-faithful servant. It would be an immense gratification to feel that, among them all, even a very few could be found to differ from me, when I say, "THANK GOD ! IT'S FINISHED !"

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